AFTER THE BATTLE

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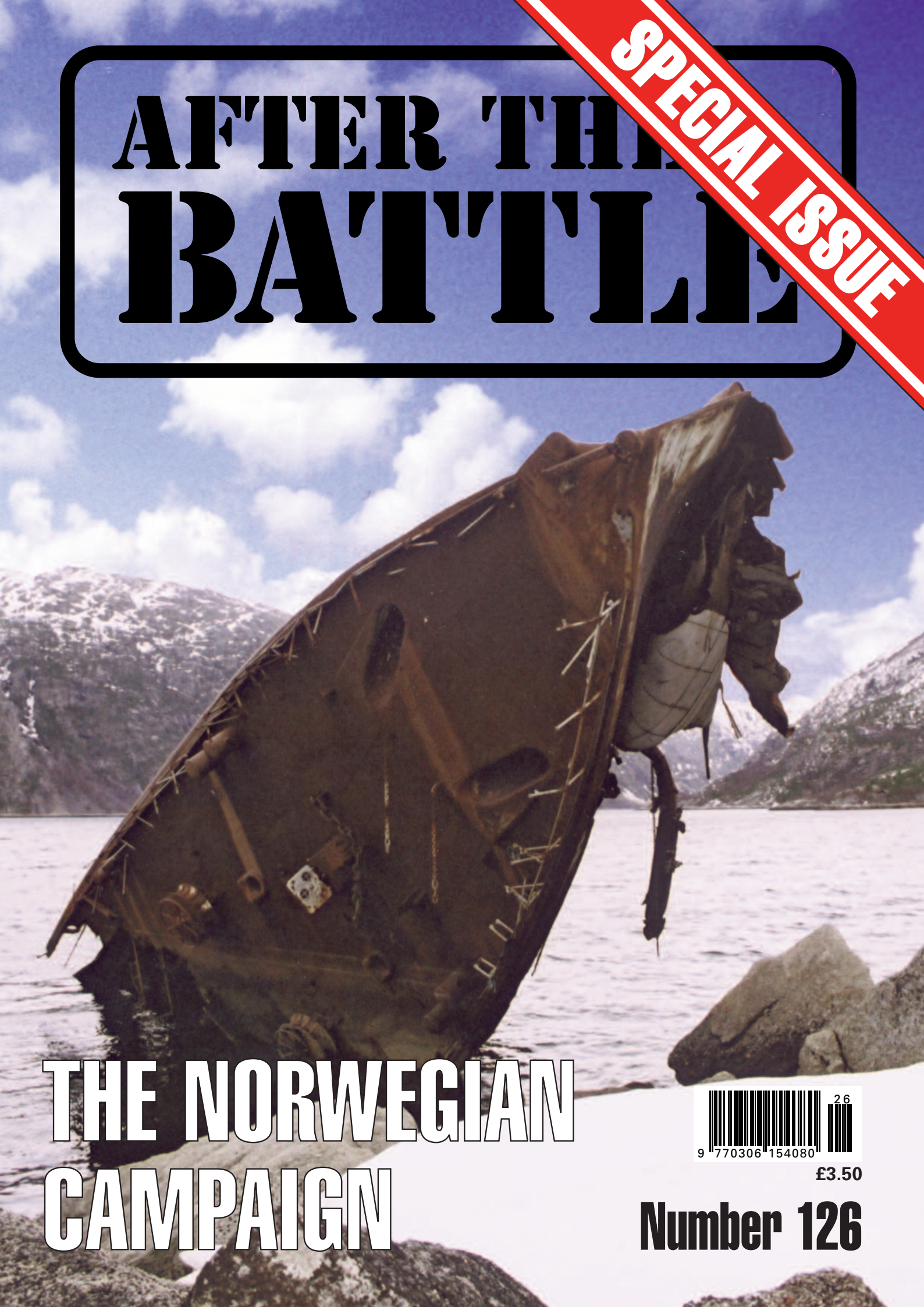

THE NORWEGIAN CAMPAIGN

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Front Cover: .At Sildvik, 15 kilometres east of Narvik, the *Georg Thiele* still lies in the remote wilderness on the southern side of Rombak fjord. In April 1940, under the command of Korvetten-kapitän Max-Eckart Wolff, she was one of the ten German destroyers that ventured to Narvik. Launched in August 1935 at Deutsche Werk at Kiel and commissioned in February 1937, she ended her days when she ran aground onto these rocks on April 13, 1940. (Jean Paul Pallud)

Centre Pages: Narvik extracted from GSGS 4072, Sheet NE68/12. Published by the War Office, 1941.

Back Cover: .Two memorials, one Norwegein and one French, now stand by the side of the E6 road just east of Narvik on Orneset beach where French and Norwegian troops landed in force on May 28, 1940. (Jean Paul Pallud)

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Håkon VII was the first King of Norway after the secession from Sweden in 1905. Formerly Prince Carl of Denmark, he was elected by the newly-independent Norwegians and was crowned at Trondheim in June 1906. Since the early 1930s, he had exerted discreet pressure on his successive governments in favour of improvements in the country's defences but Norway's constitution strictly limited the King's role and his advice was entirely disregarded. He is pictured here with Crown Prince Olav in 1941 after they had left Norway for exile in Great Britain where they continued Norway's resistance to Germany. (IWM)

Norway's strategic importance at the beginning of the Second World War was unique. With Great Britain lying to the west, if Norway was occupied by the British, or be under British control, Britain would effectively control the maritime routes from Germany to the North Sea and into the north Atlantic.

Also, Scandinavia constituted the northern flank of the European theatre of operations and the Germans could see that if the British gained a foothold in Norway, they would thereby be able to monitor Sweden and have access to the Baltic and the German coast.

Last but not least, Norway controlled the north-western route to Sweden's iron ore on which Germany's armament industry was vitally dependent. In 1939 Germany imported nine million tons of iron ore from the Kiruna and Gällivare mines in northern Sweden, the ore being transported by rail either south to the Swedish port of Luleå at the head of the Gulf of Bothnia in the Baltic, or westwards to Narvik on the north-west coast of Norway. From January through April, the Gulf, like the greater part of the Baltic, was ice-bound so the ore could then only be shipped to Germany via Narvik and then down the Norwegian Leads — the narrow sea lane which lies close to the whole of the western coast of Norway.

Control of Norwegian territorial waters, directly or indirectly, was thus of major concern to both sides. For Germany however, given her situation of naval inferiority, it was in her best interests that Norway remain strictly neutral.

Appointed First Lord of the Admiralty in the reshuffle of the British government after the declaration of war on September 3, 1939, Winston Churchill lost no time in highlighting the importance of halting the transportation of iron ore through Narvik. However his warning fell on stony ground as Lord Edward Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, was totally opposed to any intervention for Norway was neutral and Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, supported this view.

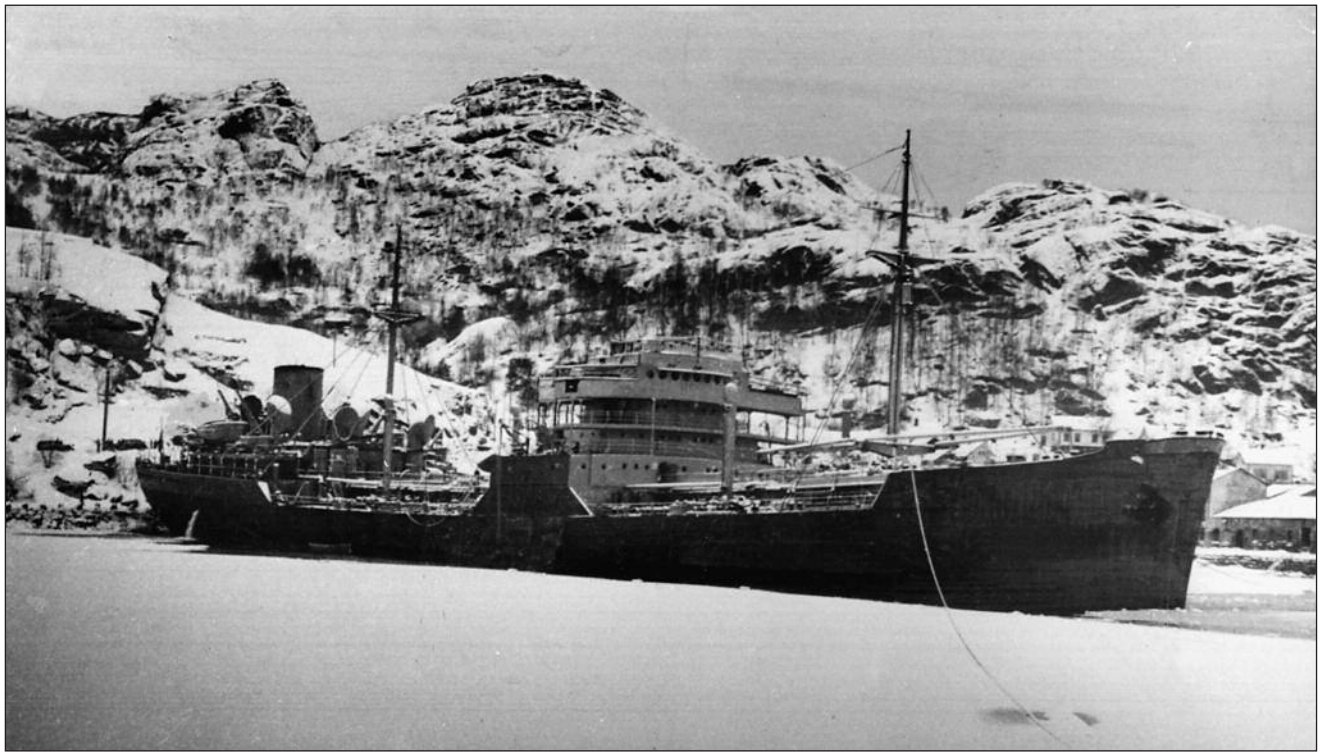
The attack on Finland by the Soviet Union on November 30 caused world-wide indignation. By mid-December the League of Nations had excluded the Soviet Union and on December 18 its Secretary-General asked every nation member to give assistance to Finland. In France, where studies had already been made on how to cut Germany's strategic supply lines, with particular reference to fuel and iron ore traffic, the appeal came as a blessing and the French soon proposed to their British allies a series of plans for naval operations at Petsamo or Murmansk. As for immediate positive assistance, a batch of 30 Morane MS 406 fighters left Dunkirk aboard a Finnish merchant ship on December 31 bound for Finland.

In Britain, the French plans were greeted with scepticism as no one accepted the prospect of war with the Soviet Union. However the Soviet attack played into Churchill's hands: 'If Narvik was to become a sort of Allied base to supply the Finns, it would certainly be easy to prevent the German ships from loading ore at the port and sailing safely down the Leads to Germany'. He proposed the mining of Norwegian territorial waters but Sir Edmund Ironside, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, then proposed a far more ambitious plan: the despatch of a large expeditionary force to Scandinavia to occupy the iron ore mines.

The month of January 1940 was spent in fruitless debates concerning the possibilities of stopping the ore traffic along the Norwegian coast without compromising the longer-term plan for an overland expedition.

At a Supreme War Council meeting held on February 5 between France and Britain, the latter refused to take any of the French plans seriously, be they for operations against the Soviet Union at Petsamo and Murmansk or in the Balkans or the Caucasus. Instead Chamberlain recommended a 'major' operation to mount an overland expedition to Scandinavia. To this suggestion Edouard Daladier, the French Prime Minister, quickly agreed so the creation of an Anglo-French expeditionary force was then approved.

In the meantime, the British War Office had been pursuing its study of the available options and by mid-February plans for the 'major' project had been finalised. The 'Avonmouth' force comprising one infantry brigade was to land at Narvik together with one brigade of French mountain troops and proceed to occupy the mines sector from Kiruna and Gällivare to the harbour of Luleå. The 'Stratford' detachment, with five



THE NORWEGIAN CAMPAIGN

By Jean Paul Pallud

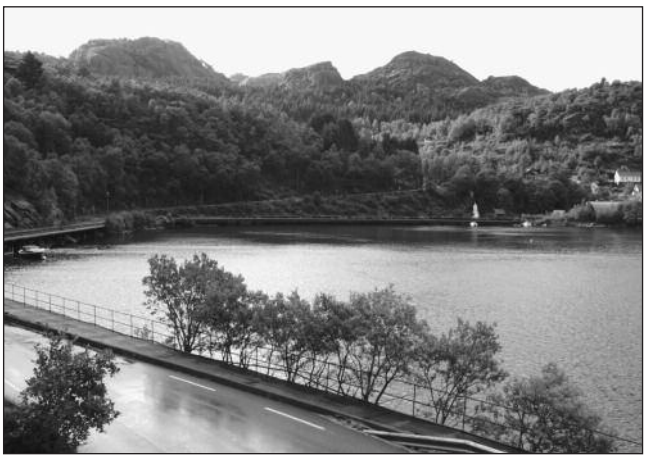
battalions, was to occupy Trondheim, Stavanger and Bergen to cover the rear of the main force, while the 'Plymouth' force, two divisions strong, was to land at Trondheim to bring assistance to the Swedes in southern Sweden.

On February 16, the British destroyer HMS *Cossack* entered Jøssingfjord near Stavanger and boarded the German *Altmark*, the former support vessel of the battleship *Admiral Graf Spee*. The 299 British prisoners that were on board were liberated and *Cossack* departed, leaving the *Altmark* stranded on a sand-bank. However the intrusion into Norwegian territorial waters led the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Halvdan Koht, to send Britain a strongly-worded diplomatic note to protest at such a blatant violation of their neutrality.

The French tried to persuade London to launch the Scandinavian operation as soon as possible and on February 20 the British made known that the earliest possible date for departure for Norway was March 12. To speed things up by a few days, the French then proposed to amend the plans so that those French contingents that were ready could go ahead immediately and land before the British. The French would come ashore beginning on March 12 and the British from March 19 as soon as the French ships had left the Norwegian harbours.

On February 23 the Finns were informed of the Franco-British plan and were promised that if they appealed for help an expeditionary force some 20,000 strong would be sent to support them by mid-April. By the end of the month, knowing that they could not resist much longer, the Finns decided to open negotiations with the Soviet Union. In the meantime, their ambassadors in London and Paris asked whether the Allies could despatch a force of 50,000 men to Finland in March.

Daladier replied positively to the Finnish ambassador's request, although this was, diplomatically speaking, jumping the gun for the French could not intervene without the British. In London, far from being so accommodating, Halifax did not even give sympathetic consideration to the Finnish appeal, and on March 4 both Sweden and Norway rejected requests to grant passage to an Allied expedition.



On February 16, 1940, the British destroyer HMS *Cossack* entered Jøssingfjord near Stavanger and boarded the *Altmark* *(top)*, the former support vessel of the German battleship *Admiral Graf Spee*. The 299 British prisoners that were on board were liberated and *Cossack* departed, leaving the *Altmark* stranded on a sandbank. *Left:* **This picture taken some days later shows the *Altmark* still aground in the same position as on the night of the battle.** *Right:* **Jøssingfjord in 2004, the comparison being taken by Even Bergum. A small memorial recalling the incident now stands where the stern touched the shore.**

From the beginning of the war Edouard Daladier *(left)*, the French Prime Minister, supported ambitious if unrealistic plans to cut Germany's strategic supply lines, with particular reference to fuel and iron ore traffic. In December 1939, following the League of Nations appeal to give assistance to Finland which had been attacked by the Soviet Union, the French proposed a series of plans for far-reaching naval operations at Petsamo or Murmansk. In Britain, these plans were greeted with scepticism. The futility of the Allied conduct of the war at that time — with obvious failure to show any effective intervention against Germany — forced Daladier to resign on March 19. Paul Reynaud *(right)*, the Minister of Finance in Daladier's cabinet, formed a new government two days later. He was in favour of a resolute offensive strategy. (ECPAD)

The French pressed London to at least set something in motion before the Finns reached an agreement with the Soviet Union and the British War Cabinet finally gave in. On March 12 a session of the War Cabinet was described by General Ironside as 'a picture of a bewildered flock of sheep faced by a problem they have consistently refused to consider'. At another meeting that evening at 10 Downing Street, chaired by an irresolute and vacillating Prime Minister, operational orders were finally approved. The expedition was to establish itself at Narvik, secure the railway to Sweden and then concentrate in that country before going to assist Finland. There was to be no fighting against the Norwegians or the Swedes.

Their governments having finally made up their minds, French and British troops were ordered to begin embarking — but by now it was too late. In Moscow, agreement was finally reached late that night and the Finns signed a peace treaty with the Soviet Union on the morning of March 13. The War Cabinet met during the morning to discuss the bombshell of the Finno-Soviet treaty. Chamberlain predictably proposed to halt everything; the War Cabinet agreed and the decision was taken to disperse the units that had been prepared for the Scandinavian expedition. Some blamed Norway and Sweden for the defeat of Finland but others, such as a Conservative Member of Parliament, Harold MacMillan, in a debate in the Commons on March 19, put the blame squarely on Chamberlain's conduct of the war.

On March 15 Daladier put pressure on London for an operation to be mounted against ore shipping from Narvik but his government was forced to resign on the 19th because of his failure to mount effective intervention against Germany. Paul Reynaud, the Minister of Finance in Daladier's cabinet, formed a new government two days later. He was known to be in favour of a resolute offensive strategy.

Churchill then proposed a new plan of action: to send aircraft carriers to Norway to attack ships in the port of Luleå and mine the approaches; to lay mines in the River Rhine and — his pet project — to sow mines in the Norwegian Leads. The War Cabinet was not opposed to the idea of laying mines in the Rhine, but the Norwegian plans were greeted with some scepticism.

On March 25 the new French Prime Minister sent a note to the British War Cabinet in which he bluntly stated that so far no one had done anything. He therefore proposed not only to interrupt German shipping in Norwegian waters but also to launch operations in the Balkans and the Black Sea to cut Germany's petrol supplies. Chamberlain's reaction to the French accusation was one of anger — he was the one who had failed so far — and the War Cabinet judged the French projects for operations in the Balkans and Black Sea as irresponsible fantasies.

The Franco-British Supreme War Council met in London on the morning of March 28. Chamberlain opened the meeting with a long monologue and then began to advocate the 'Royal Marine' plan — the mining of the Rhineland waterways. Reynaud continued in favour of an immediate mining of the Norwegian Leads. In the end, the two delegations finally agreed on the following course of action:

April 1: A diplomatic warning to be sent to Norway and Sweden to the effect that the Allies reserved the right to stop German iron ore traffic.

April 4-5: Mines to be dropped in three places in the Norwegian Leads to stop traffic from Narvik, coupled with operations against German shipping.

April 4-5: Mines to be sowed in the Rhine (subject to the agreement of the French War Council).

April 15: Taking advantage of the full moon, magnetic mines were to be dropped by aircraft in German rivers and waterways.

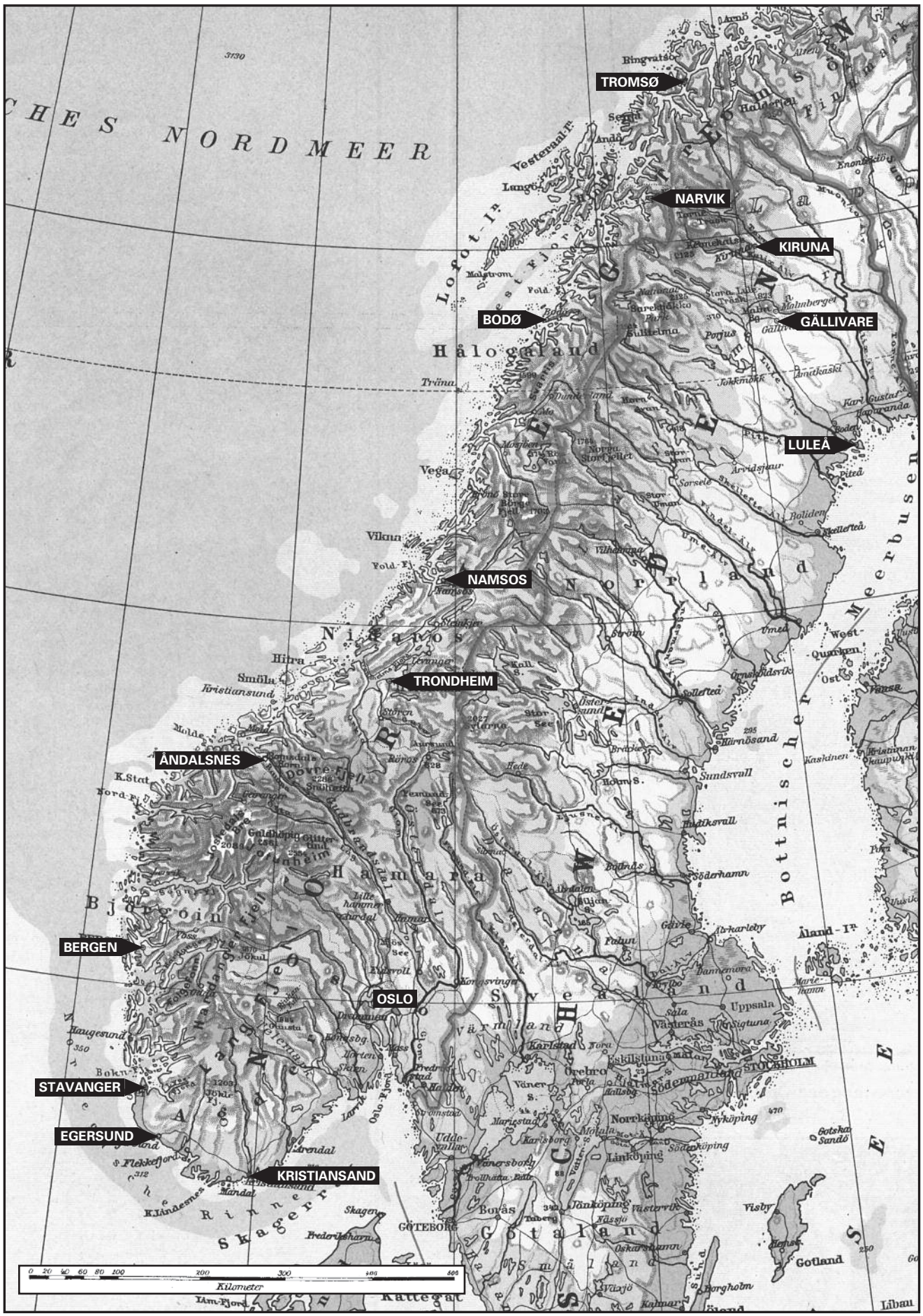
At long last there was a plan of action. The old idea of an overland expedition in Norway was not even raised nor was the possible German reaction to the mining discussed. However, when on March 30 the French War Council rejected Operation 'Royal Marine' (the minelaying of the Rhine), in retaliation Chamberlain suspended Operation 'Wilfred' (the mining of the Norwegian Leads). 'No mines, no Narvik!' the Prime Minister told the French Ambassador, Charles Corbin, on the evening of March 31.

The French studied the possibility of mining the Leads on their own but on April 3 the commander of the French Navy, Amiral François Darlan, told the War Council that they did not have sufficient ships or the equipment to achieve this alone. To break the impasse, Churchill went to Paris on the 4th to try to persuade the French to reconsider their refusal of 'Royal Marine'. Reynaud responded by pleading for the mining of the Norwegian Leads so Churchill telephoned the War Cabinet who finally agreed that Operation 'Wilfred' should go ahead.

With plans to lay mines in the Leads in the early hours of April 8, the four minelaying destroyers earmarked for the task (*Express, Esk, Icarus* and *Impulsive*) raised anchor on April 6. A force under Vice-Admiral William Whitworth comprising the battlecruiser HMS *Renown* and eight destroyers escorted them.

On the morning of April 7 at Rosyth, the British troops bound for Stavanger (two battalions of the 148th Brigade) and Bergen (two battalions of the 146th Brigade) started to embark in three cruisers, while troops earmarked for Trondheim (one battalion of the 146th Brigade) and Narvik (three battalions of the 24th Guards Brigade) started to board the cruiser HMS *Devonshire* and two transport ships in the Clyde. Under the codename 'Plan R4', these troops were poised to set sail as soon as the Germans reacted to the minelaying operation in the Leads.

Not that the British government of Neville Chamberlain *(left)* was any better. Chamberlain was opposed at first to any intervention against the German ore supply as both Norway and Sweden were neutral. He remained irresolute and vacillating day after day but on February 5 he finally agreed to recommend the mounting of an overland expedition to Scandinavia. The fiasco in Norway at the beginning of May 1940 threatened the future of his government and a vote in the Parliament on May 8 led to defeat. Even so he held back his resignation until the morning of the 10th when the Germans attacked in the West. He finally decided during the afternoon to resign and that evening the King asked to Winston Churchill *(right)*, the First Lord of the Admiralty, to form the new government.



For a detailed contemporary map of the Narvik area, see centre pages.

DARING PREVENTATIVE PLANS

Ever since 1900 the German naval authorities had acknowledged the vital importance of Norway in any sea war and on October 3, 1939 the war diary of the naval staff noted that Admiral Erich Raeder, the Commander-in-Chief of the Kriegsmarine, 'considers it necessary to acquaint the Führer, as soon as possible, with the possibilities for expanding naval operations to the north. It should be examined whether under the combined pressure of Russia and Germany, the possibility exists of acquiring bases in Norway, with the goal of a fundamental improvement in our strategic and operational situation'.

Raeder first raised the issue of bases in Norway with Hitler on October 10. At this meeting he proposed a siege of England, using sea and air power, as an alternative to the plan for a major land offensive in the West, 'Fall Gelb' (Operation 'Yellow'), that Hitler had outlined on September 27. As part of his proposal, Raeder stressed the importance of acquiring naval bases on the Norwegian west coast. However Hitler was not disposed to accept Raeder's Scandinavian plans as an alternative to 'Fall Gelb'.

At the beginning of December, Reichsleiter Alfred Rosenberg, the chief of the NSDAP's Foreign Policy Office, introduced Vidkun Quisling to Admiral Raeder. In the early 1930s Quisling had been the Norwegian War Minister but was then the leader of the Nasjonal Samling (National Union), a small and inconsequential nationalistic party. On December 14 Raeder and Rosenberg took Quisling to see Hitler personally. Quisling explained that Great Britain had strategic aims in Scandinavia, a move that Norway could not oppose. He argued that to counter these plans, he would assume power in Norway through a coup, but that he would then need the protection of the Third Reich.

Hitler made clear that he doubted that such a small organisation — Quisling's Nasjonal Samling had no more than 10,000 members — could gain power by itself when faced with the police, the army and the trade unions. However, as recorded by Generalmajor Alfred Jodl, the Chief of Operations of the Armed Forces High Command (OKW), that same evening Hitler had taken note of Quisling's warning as to British aims in Norway: 'Führer orders investigation, with smallest possible staff, of how occupation of Norway can be carried out.'

The OKW quickly carried out the investigation and, under the code-name 'Studie Nord', reports submitted by the three branches of the armed forces were integrated. A first draft was presented to Hitler on January 20. A 'Sonderstab' (special staff) was then created within OKW to prepare the operational plans, which began work in great secrecy on February 5. The plan envisaged the simultaneous occupation of all the main ports on the Norwegian coast by lightning naval action. Reinforcements would then arrive in successive waves by sea and air.

In mid-February, as the operational details were being finalised, Hitler continued to view them as purely preventive. His attention was still monopolised by his plans for a decisive offensive in the West and he had no intention of weakening them by mounting a diversion in Scandinavia. He would much prefer that Norway remain neutral and wanted to trust that Norway would dissuade the British from carrying out any undertaking in the north.

However, Scandinavia was suddenly brought back to the fore when the Royal Navy boarded the *Altmark*, anchored in Jøssingfjord. Raeder noted how 'the event threw a whole new light on the matter for it showed that the Oslo government was no longer capable of enforcing its neutrality.' Consequently, on February 19, Hitler ordered the speeding up of the planning work for the intervention in Norway. Jodl suggested that a general and his staff be entrusted with the co-ordination of all preparations and the name of General der Infanterie Nikolaus von Falkenhorst was put forward. He had been Chief-of-Staff of the German task force which had landed in Finland in 1918 and had thereby achieved valuable experience of operations in the north.

On March 1, 1940 Hitler signed the directive for carrying out Operation 'Weserübung'. In it he laid down that General der Infanterie Nikolaus von Falkenhorst was 'to prepare and command the operation against Denmark and Norway, as Commander Gruppe XXI. He will be immediately subordinate to me in all respects. His staff will be composed of officers of the three services.' General von Falkenhorst already had some experience of operations under Nordic conditions having served as Chief-of-Staff to the German force that intervened in Finland in 1918 to support General Carl Gustav von Mannerheim's 'White Guards'. However he had no particular knowledge of Norway itself and he later said how he went to town to buy a Baedecker tourist guide to find out where the main harbours were! This photo was taken in Norway later in the war when he was Commander-in-Chief Norway (Wehrmachtbefehlshaber Norwegen), a position that he held until 1944. (ECPAD)

On February 21 Hitler received von Falkenhorst and asked him about the co-ordination between army and navy during the landing operations in 1918. He then told him that he had information that the British intended to land in Norway and had reached an agreement with the Norwegians in this matter. Von Falkenhorst later commented: 'I could feel the sheer nervousness caused by the Jøssingfjord affair.'

Von Falkenhorst reported back that same afternoon and gave a broad outline of his thinking. Hitler directed him to finish his plans swiftly for there was no time to lose. 'He seemed preoccupied by the idea that our undertaking might be compromised by an English operation', von Falkenhorst reported later.

From February 26 he started to finalise the plans with a new staff in Berlin including former members of the 'Sonderstab'. Quickly OKW approved von Falkenhorst's proposal for a simultaneous invasion of Jutland, the Danish peninsula, and Hitler subsequently added a landing at Copenhagen as well. Then, on a suggestion from Jodl, Hitler decided that the occupation of Norway and Denmark should be planned independently of 'Fall Gelb' in terms of time and forces employed.

The modest size of the Kriegsmarine severely limited the number of troops that could participate in the assault phase of the campaign and the directives finally detailed an operation comprising two phases. In the first, assault groups would surprise and capture the six most strategic locations (Oslo, Kristiansand, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim and Narvik) and two secondary (Arendal and Egersund) through sea and airborne operations. All these cities lay on the coast and possessed harbours where the Kriegsmarine would land the assault troops with their light equipment and armament. A number of other desirable targets like Åndalsnes, Namsos and Tromsø had had to be disregarded due to the limited transport capacity available. In phase two, reinforcements of troops and equipment would arrive at Oslo by sea and move inland to establish contact with the widely dispersed assault groups, at first with those in southern and central Norway and then with the one at Narvik in the distant north.

On February 29, a few days after the final plan for 'Fall Gelb' (the attack in the West) had been issued, the revised plan for the Scandinavian enterprise was shown to Hitler. He said he was satisfied and gave his approval and on the following day, March 1, he signed the 'Directive for Weserübung'. Denmark and Norway were to be occupied to anticipate British action against Scandinavia and the Baltic; to secure supplies of ore from Sweden; and to provide the Kriegsmarine and the Luftwaffe with expanded bases for operations against England. 'The forces employed will be as small as possible having regard to our military and political strength in relation to the northern nations. Weakness in numbers will be made good by skilful action and surprise in execution.'

Two days later Hitler decided to launch the attack before the offensive in the West but, just before the Finno-Soviet cease-fire, German intelligence noted signs of extreme agitation in the Allied camp. This very nearly prompted Hitler to order the immediate start of 'Weserübung' but the signing of the Moscow peace agreement on March 13, and the run-down of the Allied naval build-up in the North Sea, eased the situation. Nevertheless, Hitler ordered that preparations be completed quietly and with particular attention to camouflage. Jodl then reported that

Johan Nygaardsvold of the Norwegian Labour Party had been the Prime Minister of Norway since 1935. Reductions in the defence budget dated back to the 1920s but his administration bore the main responsibility for the belated, inadequate response to threatening developments after 1935. Nygaardsvold and his Cabinet were to leave Norway for Great Britain in June 1940 where he remained Prime Minister in exile until 1945. (Resistance Museum, Oslo)

the operation could be launched on March 20 but the ice remained unusually long in the Baltic, delaying preparations of the transport fleet until March 18. On April 1, all the navy, army and air forces commanders were called to report to Hitler.

The following day a top-level conference was held with Hitler, Göring, Raeder, Keitel and von Falkenhorst. As the weather and ice conditions were favourable, it was decided to launch the attack on April 9 at 5.15 a.m. on all objectives simultaneously in Denmark and Norway. D-Day was named Weser-Tag (Weser Day) or W-Tag for short. At 5.20 a.m. the German minister in Oslo was to hand a formal diplomatic note to King Håkon VII as the minister in Copenhagen delivered a similar one to King Christian X.

The forces involved in the Scandinavian operation were the following:

Two infantry divisions (the 170. and 198. Infanterie-Divisions) for operations in Denmark under Gruppe XXXI (General des Flieger Leonard Kaupisch);

Two mountain divisions (the 2. and 3. Gebirgs-Divisions) and five infantry divisions (the 69., 163., 181., 196. and 214. Infanterie-Divisions) for operations in Norway under Gruppe XXI (General der Infanterie Nikolaus von Falkenhorst).

Controlling the approaches to Bergen, the Kvarven battery was armed in 1940 with three 210mm guns and three 240mm howitzers. The battery was decommissioned in the 1950s with all the guns being scrapped. In the late 1980s, the site was opened to the public as a recreational area and a German 150mm SK L/45 gun was placed in one of the original Norwegian 210mm emplacements *(above)*. Taken from a battery built by the Germans at Løkhaug in the fjord at Trondheim, this gun on its special carriage is quite rare. Of the Kvarven battery itself, one can now inspect the old gun emplacements and the exterior of the torpedo battery. (J-B. Wahl)

NORWEGIAN LACK OF PREPARATION

By 1939, the Socialist government in Norway, which had been elected in 1935, had covered much ground in economic and social progress but had failed in providing even a minimal defence for the country. From 1937, the commanders of the Norwegian armed forces were becoming increasingly alarmed at events in Europe and they tried desperately to obtain an increase in military expenditure. But Prime Minister Johan Nygaardsvold, and the Foreign Minister, Halvdan Koht, were still clinging to their pacifist visions and nothing was done.

When World War II began in September 1939 Norway maintained its neutrality and the Army was called upon to provide a neutrality watch on the borders. There was sympathy for Finland during the Russo-Finnish war but nothing was done to aid the Finns and at the beginning of March 1940 Norway (and Sweden too) categorically rejected an Anglo-French demand for granting passage of troops to help Finland. By 1940, the Norwegian army had a peacetime strength of 19,000 men, one-fifth of its mobilisation strength. It was not an impressive force, particularly when one bears in mind that general mobilisation would necessarily take a long time. The soldiers' Krag-Jørgensen rifles were obsolete; they had no sub-machine guns, no anti-aircraft guns, no tanks and little artillery.

Norway was divided into six military district commands. Each district was responsible for mobilising one brigade, each one of the latter consisting of two or three infantry regiments, and other smaller units. All forces mobilised within a district were organised into a division, but this was more for administrative purposes since the main field unit was the brigade.

The first four districts/divisions, covering southern Norway, had command posts at Halden (Generalmajor Carl Johan Erichsen); Oslo (Generalmajor Jacob Hvinden Haug); Kristiansand (Generalmajor Einar Liljedahl), and Bergen (Generalmajor William Steffens) respectively. The 5th Division (Generalmajor Jacob Laurantzon), raised in central Norway, had its command post at Trondheim, and the 6th Division (Generalmajor Carl Gustav Fleischer), in northern Norway, at Harstad. The overall commander-in-chief was General Kristian Laake.

Mobilisation of forces was to continue throughout the campaign and, at the most, there were to be between 40,000 and 50,000 Norwegian troops opposing the German advance.

The Norwegian Navy, whose commander-in-chief was Kontreadmiral Henry Diesen, was divided into three Sea Defence Districts (Sjøforsvarsdistrikt). It operated about 70 small vessels of which only the four destroyers of the Sleipner class (two more were yet to be commissioned) were of a modern design. The two largest ships, the *Norge* and *Eidsvold*, had been launched in 1899 and were in fact the oldest ironclads in the world.

Norway's five major ports were all protected by coastal artillery: two batteries at Oslofjord and Oscarsborg covered the approaches to Oslo, two more defended Kristiansand and Bergen, and a fifth battery at Agdenes guarded the access to Trondheim. However the batteries had only skeleton crews. For example on April 8 the Oscarsborg fortress of seven forts and batteries was manned by only 45 officers and 293 men — a quarter of its nominal garrison — and some of its batteries were not manned at all.

There was an army air force and a naval air force, which did not ease co-ordination, but each had few aircraft, the most recent being ten Gladiators of the Jägervingen, the army fighter squadron, based near Oslo.

WESERÜBUNG NORD

Totalling 8,850 men, the seaborne assault forces of Weserübung Nord — the invasion of Norway — were distributed among six naval groups targeted to Oslo, Kristiansand, Egersund, Bergen, Trondheim and Narvik. To ensure greater speed the OKW had decided to transport the initial landing forces on warships — cruisers, destroyers, torpedo boats and minesweepers — rather than on slower transport vessels. The six naval groups had to approach their objectives simultaneously to land the assault troops on W-Tag and they set sail from harbours in Germany between midnight on April 6 and the dawn of April 8.

Since the cargo and fuel capacity of the warships bringing the assault squadrons was greatly limited, OKW had planned in addition to organise additional transport groups to compensate for these limitations.

First, the Export Echelon (Ausfuhr-Staffel) would transport the supplies and heavy equipment, including artillery and Flak batteries, for the assault forces embarked upon the warships. These steamers would proceed as if on normal commercial cruises to Murmansk and put into Norwegian harbours prior to the arrival of the assault squadrons. The seven 'precursor' ships left Hamburg between April 3 and 7 bound for Narvik (three ships), Trondheim (three ships) and Stavanger (one ship). Their arrival would be on April 8 — the day before Weser-Tag — and timed late enough so that the customs inspection of their loads would be delayed until the following day. However, it should be pointed out that these 'precursor' ships transported no troops.

The Tanker Echelon (Tanker-Staffel) would transport the fuel required both for army and air operations in Norway as well as for the warships' return journey. Proceeding unprotected, the three larger tankers were to arrive on W-Tag, the *Skagerrak* to Trondheim and the *Kattegat* and the *Jan Wellem* to Narvik. Two smaller tankers were bound for Oslo, one for Bergen, one for Stavanger and one for Kristiansand.

Additionally, three Sea Transport Echelons had been organised to bring to the south of Norway the bulk of the troops and supplies required for the break-out and link-up with the northern landing sites. The first flotilla of 15 ships was to start out on April 6 and 7, with three vessels scheduled for Bergen, three for Stavanger, four for Kristiansand and five for Oslo. Altogether, this fleet would bring in 3,761 men, 672 horses, 1,377 vehicles, four tanks and 5,935 tonnes of material and supplies. On W-Tag plus 2, a second transport flotilla with 11 ships was to reach Oslo, as was a third with 12 ships on W-Tag plus 6.

Finally, with its 500 transport aircraft, the X. Fliegerkorps was tasked to deliver 3,000 parachute and airborne troops in the initial assault on W-Tag of Operation 'Weserübung'. One of the primary objectives in Norway, Stavanger, was even to be taken by air assault only.

The X. Fliegerkorps was then to transport an additional 8,000 troops to Norway within the first three days of the campaign: the first wave of aircraft was to fly in two battalions to Oslo on W-Tag; a second was to follow on W-Tag plus 1 with two battalions; a third wave carrying three battalions was to come in on W-Tag plus 2, and a fourth with two more battalions on W-Tag plus 3.

In addition to its 500 transport aircraft – mainly Ju 52s but also some 20 He 59 floatplanes and a handful each of Ju 90 and Fw 200 four-engined aircraft – the X. Fliegerkorps at the beginning of the operation had over 345 other aircraft available for operations: over 220 bombers – mainly He 111s, Ju 88s and some Ju 87s –, some 95 Bf 109 and Bf 110 fighters, and about 40 reconnaissance aircraft.

WESERÜBUNG NORD
SEABORNE ASSAULT FORCES

Narvik (Gruppe 1)
Under Kapitän zur See Friedrich Bonte, ten destroyers.

Z-2 Georg Thiele, Korvettenkapitän Max-Eckart Wolff
Z-9 Wolfgang Zenker, Fregattenkapitän Gottfried Pönitz
Z-11 Bernd von Arnim, Korvettenkapitän Kurt Rechel
Z-12 Erich Giese, Korvettenkapitän Karl Schmidt
Z-13 Erich Koellner, Korvettenkapitän Alfred Schulze-Hinrichs
Z-17 Diether von Roeder, Korvettenkapitän Erich Holtorf
Z-18 Hans Lüdemann, Korvettenkapitän Herbert Friedrich
Z-19 Hermann Künne, Korvettenkapitän Friedrich Kothe
Z-21 Wilhelm Heidkamp, Korvettenkapitän Hans Erdmenger
Z-22 Anton Schmitt, Korvettenkapitän Friedrich Böhme

Trondheim (Gruppe 2)
Under Kapitän zur See Hellmuth Heye, one cruiser and four destroyers.

Admiral Hipper, Kapitän zur See Hellmuth Heye
Z-5 Paul Jacobi, Korvettenkapitän Hans Zimmer
Z-6 Theodor Riedel, Korvettenkapitän Gerhardt Bömig
Z-8 Bruno Heinemann, Korvettenkapitän Georg Langheld
Z-16 Friedrich Eckoldt, Korvettenkapitän Alfred Schemmel

Bergen (Gruppe 3)
Under Konteradmiral Hubert Schmundt, two cruisers, two support ships, two torpedo boats and one flotilla of motor torpedo boats.

Köln, Kapitän zur See Ernst Kratzenberg
Königsberg, Kapitän zur See Heinrich Rufus
Bremse, Fregattenkapitän Jak Förschner
Karl Peters, Kapitänleutnant Otto Hinzke
Wolf, Oberleutnant Broder Peters
Leopard, Kapitänleutnant Hans Trummer
1. S-Boots-Flotille, Kapitänleutnant Heinz Birnbacher, with the *S-19*, *S-21*, *S-22*, *S-23* and *S-24*

Kristiansand (Gruppe 4)
Under Kapitän zur See Friedrich Rieve, one cruiser, one support ship, three torpedo boats and one flotilla of motor torpedo boats.

Karlsruhe, Kapitän zur See Friedrich Rieve
Tsingtau, Kapitän zur See Karl Klinger
Luchs, Kapitänleutnant Karl Kassbaum
Greif, Kapitänleutnant Wilhelm von Lyncker
Seeadler, Kapitänleutnant Franz Kohlauf
2. S-Boots-Flotille, Korvettenkapitän Rudolf Petersen, with the *S-7*, *S-8*, *S-17*, *S-30*, *S-31*, *S-32* and *S-33*

Oslo (Gruppe 5)
Under Konteradmiral Oskar Kummetz, three cruisers, three torpedo boats and one flotilla of minesweepers.

Blücher, Kapitän zur See Heinrich Woldag
Lützow, Kapitän zur See August Thiele
Emdem, Kapitän zur See Werner Lange
Möwe, Kapitänleutnant Helmut Neuss
Kondor, Kapitänleutnant Hans Wilcke
Albatros, Kapitänleutnant Siegfried Strelow
1. R-Boots-Flotille, Kapitänleutnant Gustav Forstmann, with the *R-17*, *R-18*, *R-19*, *R-20*, *R-21*, *R-22*, *R-23* and *R-24*

Egersund (Gruppe 6)
Under Korvettenkapitän Kurt Thoma, four minesweepers.
M-1, *M-2*, *M-9* and *M-13*

Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst
Two battleships, the *Gneisenau* under Kapitän zur See Harald Netzbandt and the *Scharnhorst* under Kapitän zur See Kurt-Caesar Hoffmann, were to escort Group Narvik as far as north as off Mo and then turn northwards to make a diversion.

Group Narvik

Under Kapitän zur See Friedrich Bonte, ten destroyers of the 3. Zerstörer-Flotille and 4. Zerstörer-Flotille were to load army troops (Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 139 with three battalions — about 2,000 men) at Wesermünde and sail at midnight on April 6 for Narvik. Two battleships, the *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst*, were to escort the group until it was off Namsos late on the 8th at which point they would turn northwards to create a diversion.

Group Trondheim

Under Kapitän zur See Hellmuth Heye, one cruiser and four destroyers of the 2. Zerstörer-Flotille would sail from Cuxhaven at midnight on April 6 to take Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 138 with three battalions (less one company), one company of engineers and one battery of mountain artillery, about 1,700 men all told, to Trondheim. This group was to sail together with Group Narvik and their escorts until they reached Trondheim on the morning of April 8 when it was to turn northwards as a diversion before making a U-turn and head back for Trondheim.

Group Bergen

Under Konteradmiral Hubert Schmundt, two cruisers, two support ships, two torpedo boats and five motor torpedo boats of the 1. Schnellboots-Flotille was to sail at midnight on April 7, some leaving from Wesermünde and others from Cuxhaven. The force was to transport the staff of Infanterie-Regiment 159 with two of its battalions (less one company), two companies of engineers and the staff of the 69. Infanterie-Division, a total of around 1,900 men, destined for Bergen.

Transport aircraft were then to land on W-Tag with the 5. Kompanie of Infanterie-Regiment 159 while three ships would bring in more elements of the 69. Infanterie-Division.

Group Stavanger

Stavanger, which possessed the largest airfield in Norway, was the only objective to be initially attacked by an air assault. One company of paratroopers comprising 131 men from the 3. Kompanie of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 1 under Oberleutnant Hennig von Brandis, was to jump in the morning of W-Tag on the airfield at Sola. Transport aircraft would then land and bring in two battalions from Infanterie-Regiment 193 plus the regimental staff, a total of 1,400 men, together with 9,000 litres of fuel. Three transports (*Tübingen*, *Tijuca*, *Mendoza*) would then enter the harbour bringing more elements of Infanterie-Regiment 193, their equipment and armament, and artillery and anti-aircraft guns. On W-Tag plus 1, another wave of transport aircraft was to bring in the III. Bataillon of Infanterie-Regiment 193.

Group Kristiansand

Under Kapitän zur See Friedrich Rieve, one cruiser, one support ship, three torpedo boats and the seven motor torpedo boats of the 2. Schnellboots-Flotille was to leave from Wesermünde at 5 a.m. on April 8. The force was to carry one battalion of Infanterie-Regiment 310 plus its staff — about 1,100 men — to Kristiansand, while one of the torpedo boats, the *Greif*, was to land a 100-man party at Arendal to cut the telephone cable to England. Four transports would then land another battalion of Infanterie-Regiment 310, more equipment and artillery and anti-aircraft guns at Kristiansand.

Group Oslo

Under Konteradmiral Oskar Kummetz, three cruisers, three torpedo boats and a flotilla of minesweepers was scheduled to leave Swinemünde at 10 p.m. on April 7, destination Oslo. The force was to land two battalions of Infanterie-Regiment 307, one battalion of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 138, one company of engineers, parts of the staff of the 163. Infanterie-Division and of Gruppe XXI giving a total of 2,000 men.

The 1. and 2. Kompanies of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 1 were to be dropped on the airfield at Fornebu, near Oslo, during the morning. Once the aerodrome had been secured, the first wave of transport aircraft would bring in two battalions of Infanterie-Regiment 324, one company of engineers, more elements of the 163. Infanterie-Division and Gruppe XXI staffs. All in all about 2,100 men. The five ships of the first fleet of transport were also to arrive on W-Tag with artillery and Flak and a platoon of tanks.

Inquisite sailors line the rails of the German cruiser *Admiral Hipper* as troops from Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 138 begin to board the ship at Cuxhaven where Gruppe 2 — comprising the *Hipper* and four destroyers — had assembled. Gruppe 2 set sail at midnight on April 6. (Bundesarchiv)

Group Egersund

Under Korvettenkapitän Kurt Thoma, four minesweepers would depart from Cuxhaven at 5.30 a.m. on April 8 to land a 150-man party from the 69. Infanterie-Division at Egersund tasked to cut the telephone cable to Peterhead in Scotland.

Finally, the Kriegsmarine temporarily stood down its U-Boat activity in the Atlantic to provide protection for Weserübung and nine groups of U-Boats were deployed off Narvik, Trondheim, Bergen, Stavanger and Egersund and in crucial sectors of the North Sea.

SEA AND AIR TRANSPORT ECHELONS, OSLO

W-Tag
First wave of transport aircraft:
Two battalions of Infanterie-Regiment 324, the regimental staff, one company of engineers, elements of the 163. Infanterie-Division and Gruppe XXI staffs, 9,000 litres of fuel.

W-Tag
First sea transport echelon with five ships:
Batteries of artillery and Flak, airbase equipment and aviation fuel, and one platoon of tanks from the 3. Kompanie of Panzer-Abteilung z.b.V. 40.

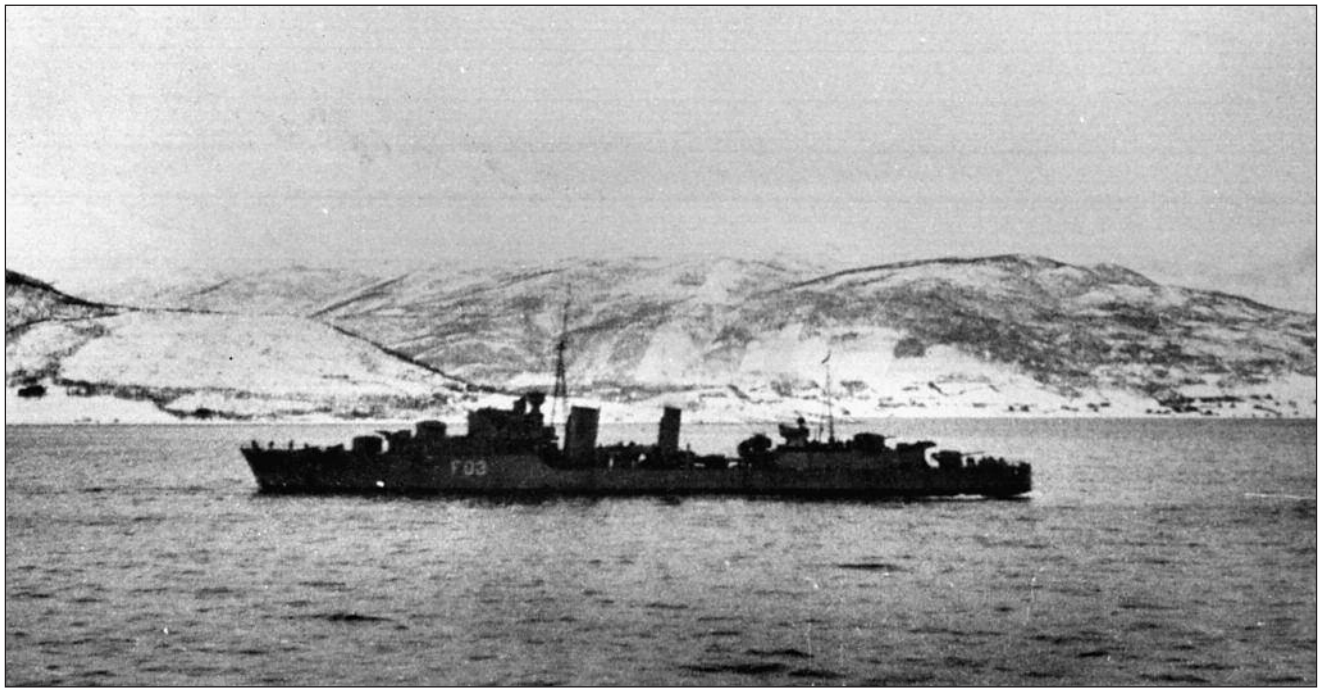
W-Tag plus 1
Second wave of transport aircraft:
Two battalions, one of Infanterie-Regiment 324 and one of Infanterie-Regiment 307.

W-Tag plus 2
Second sea transport echelon with 11 ships:
The 196. Infanterie-Division with 8,701 men, 945 horses, 453 vehicles and 4,200 tonnes of material and supplies.

W-Tag plus 2
Third wave of transport aircraft:
Two battalions of Infanterie-Regiment 310 and one of Infanterie-Regiment 236, the staff of the latter regiment and one company of engineers.

W-Tag plus 3
Fourth wave of transport aircraft:
Two battalions of Infanterie-Regiment 236.

W-Tag plus 6
Third sea transport echelon with 12 ships:
The main parts of 181. Infanterie-Division with 8,052 men, 893 horses, 577 vehicles and 3,450 tonnes of material and supplies.



Meanwhile the Royal Navy began to carry out Operation 'Wilfred' — the laying of mines in the Norwegian Leads — and the same day four minelaying destroyers sailed for Norway escorted by the battle-cruiser *Renown* and eight destroyers. The mines were laid in Vestfjord, off Bodø, in the early morning of April 8. This was the day that the cruisers *Devonshire, Bervick, York* and *Glasgow* set sail from Rosyth escorted by six destroyers. *Above:* One of them was *Cossack* pictured here some days later at Skelfjord near the southern extremity of the Lofotens where ships were based to cover the approach to the Vestfjord.

CONFUSION ON THE ALLIED SIDE

From the beginning of April, information from Berlin and Copenhagen had reached Oslo (and Paris and London) about troop concentrations in Germany and the sailing of many German warships off the Danish coast on a northern course. There were also rumours of moves for the occupation of Denmark and Norway.

On the morning of April 7, Hudsons of RAF Coastal Command reported a German cruiser and six destroyers sailing due north 130 miles south of Cape Lindesnes, the southern tip of Norway. Early that same afternoon, 12 Blenheims of No. 107 Wing spotted the same convoy, then 80 miles south of Cape Lindesnes, and attacked the ships but without success. As a radio black-out was in place, it was only when they returned to base later in the afternoon that the presence of a large German fleet was reported heading north-westwards with two battle-cruisers, three cruisers and 12 destroyers. These were the two German naval squadrons sailing for Narvik and Trondheim.

At the British Admiralty, no one believed that Norway was the target and the general consensus was that the German force was en route for the Atlantic to attack convoys. That evening the Home Fleet under Admiral Sir Charles Forbes left Scapa Flow to intercept the German squadrons. The force comprised three battleships (*Rodney*, *Valiant* and *Repulse*), two cruisers (*Penelope* and *Sheffield*) and ten destroyers. A second squadron with two cruisers (*Arethusa* and *Galatea*) and four destroyers left Rosyth immediately afterwards. Ships at sea in escorting the ON25 convoy were called in and two more cruisers (*Manchester* and *Southampton*) and four destroyers joined the operation, as well as a French cruiser (*Emile Bertin*) and two French destroyers.

At Rosyth, the four cruisers (*Devonshire*, *Bervick*, *York* and *Glasgow*) which had already taken on the troops destined for Norway were ordered to off-load quickly and to join up with the Home Fleet. Confusion followed as the ships were hastily unloaded with equipment being piled on the quays in disorder and with much loss and destruction.

The mines planned to be laid in Vestfjord, off Bodø, were laid in the early morning of April 8, and at 6 a.m. the British and French ministers in Oslo delivered a note to the Norwegian Foreign Minister advising that minefields had been deployed the previous night in Norwegian territorial waters.

Early that morning, off Kristiansund, the destroyer *Glowworm*, sailing with Admiral Whitworth's force, had become separated when she tried to recover one of her men who had been washed overboard. About 9 a.m., she suddenly came across the *Bernd von Arnim* of Group Narvik. The German destroyer tried to engage her opponent but she could not weather the rough seas and she called the *Admiral Hipper* for assistance. About 10 a.m. the *Hipper* came looming out of the mist and immediately opened fire. Bursting through the *Glowworm*'s smokescreen, the two ships suddenly found themselves only metres apart. As they turned towards each other on a ramming course, the more manoeuvrable British destroyer caught the *Hipper* on the starboard bow. The damage to the German was not serious but the *Glowworm* was then at point-blank range and she soon capsized. Only 31 survivors were picked up by boats lowered by the *Hipper*.

The French Navy also started out for Norway and their first convoy of four transports escorted by three destroyers sailed from Brest on April 12 to reach Greenock on the 14th. The ships were transporting three battalions of the 5ème Demi-Brigade de Chasseurs Alpins, scheduled for landing at Narvik. This picture was taken about mid-April, possibly on board the auxiliary cruiser *El Mansour* with the French cruiser *Emile Bertin* in the background. (ECPAD)

On the morning of April 8, in rain and rough seas, HMS *Glowworm* sighted a destroyer from Gruppe 1 en route to Narvik. Fire was opened and a second German destroyer appeared but, as both were packed with invasion troops, they soon turned away into a rain squall. About 10 a.m. the cruiser *Hipper* came into view and opened fire. In turn, *Glowworm* laid smoke and launched torpedoes but failed to score a hit on the cruiser. The two ships then turned towards each other on a ramming course which resulted in the more manoeuvrable *Glowworm* catching the *Hipper* a blow on the starboard bow. (Bundesarchiv)

Meanwhile, following receipt of a signal from *Glowworm*, Forbes detached the *Repulse*, *Penelope* and four destroyers northwards to intercept the German force.

The two German squadrons split during the morning, and while Group Narvik kept heading north-eastwards, Group Trondheim turned north-westwards and changed course several times to create a diversion as it lay in wait for its scheduled time to land. Meanwhile, the battleships *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* stayed with Group Narvik until the evening when they turned northwards to create another diversion.

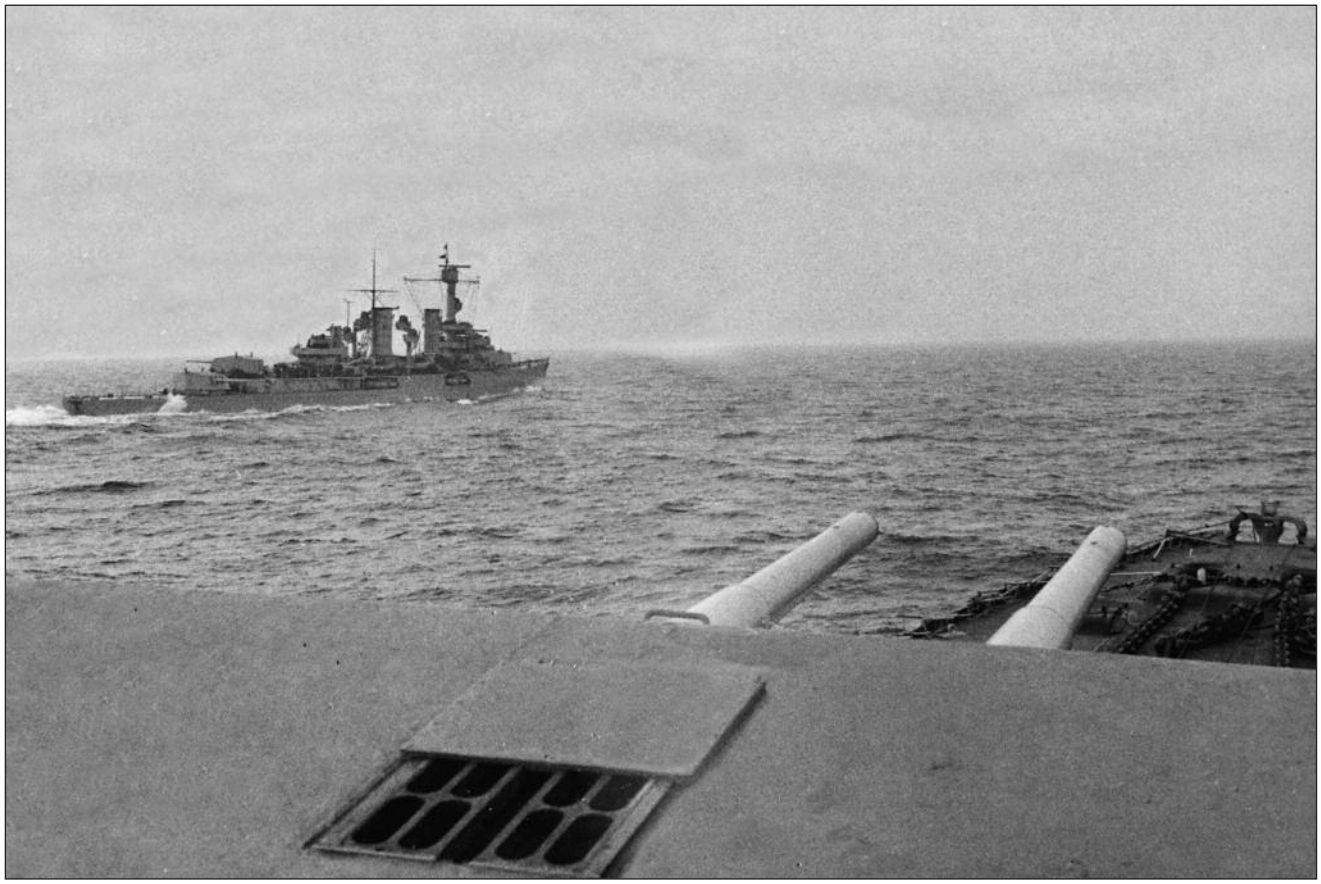
About 2 p.m. a Sunderland flying boat spotted Group Trondheim as it was sailing westward and radioed the position. As a result, Forbes decided to head north-westwards to try to intercept. However within an hour the *Hipper* and the four destroyers of Group Trondheim had turned in a southerly direction and were now heading for their target.

Further south, Groups 3, 4 and 6 were by then approaching the southern tip of Norway on their way to Bergen, Kristiansand and Egersund and, due to heavy fog, they remained undetected. Meanwhile Group 5 was emerging from the Kattegat heading north at full speed in the direction of Oslo. When information reached Forbes later in the afternoon that sizeable German squadrons were sailing in the Kattegat and Skagerrak, he turned the Home Fleet southwards. Meanwhile, he ordered those ships that he had detached in the morning to maintain course northwards to join up with Admiral Whitworth's force.

In the evening of the 8th, the Norwegian Minister of Defence told Parliament that a German merchant ship, the *Rio de Janeiro*, had been sunk in the Skagerrak that morning (actually torpedoed off Arendal by the Polish submarine *Orzel*). German troops were on board and survivors said that they were bound for Bergen and that the ship had also been carrying horses and artillery. They also claimed that their purpose was to assist the Norwegians at their request.

It was a seemingly ludicrous situation with two protagonists at war with each other both planning to invade a neutral country at exactly the same time to protect it from the other! Initially the Norwegian government was more concerned with the perceived and more conspicuous threat coming from Britain but, in spite of alarming news about a possible German attack, it still did not order mobilisation. It was only in the early hours of April 9, when news arrived of the German convoys approaching Bergen, Oslo and Stavanger, that the government finally decided to mobilise the four brigades stationed in southern Norway as the general staff had been recommending since April 5. Sometime between 4 and 5 a.m. the Defence Minister Birger Ljungberg personally informed the commander-in-chief of the army, General Kristian Laake, of the government's decision to mobilise the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Brigades.

The damage to the German was not serious but *Glowworm* then received direct hits from another salvo from the *Hipper*. Lieutenant-Commander Gerard B. Roope gave order to abandon ship, the seacocks were opened, and *Glowworm* started to sink. Kapitän zur See Heye positioned his ship so that the tidal currents would carry the survivors to the *Hipper* and he remained on station for over an hour picking up survivors. Only 31 could be saved and HMS *Glowworm* went down with 118 of the crew, including Lieutenant-Commander Roope who was posthumously awarded the VC. (Bundesarchiv)



This picture of the *Königsberg* was taken from the *Köln* on April 7 when Gruppe 3 was bound for Bergen. Launched in 1927, *Königsberg* was the first in a class of three light cruisers, the *Köln* being the third. (The second in the class was *Karlsrühe*). These cruisers mounted three turrets each containing three 150mm guns in an unusual layout in that two of these turrets faced to the rear. They had a secondary armament of six 88mm guns in three double turrets and eight 37mm AA guns — a very strong anti-aircraft capability for the period. Note how the main turret in the foreground has been painted yellow as an air recognition marking in an attempt to avoid a repetition of the disaster of Operation 'Wikinger' in February 1940. Then, a Heinkel He 111 had mistakenly dropped five bombs on destroyers. The same day two of the destroyers were sunk north-west of Borkum and, although at the time it was unclear as to the precise cause of the loss, it was more than likely that British mines, not a few small bombs dropped by the lone He 111, had caused the loss of the ships. Communication between the Luftwaffe and the Kriegsmarine was also non-existant on this particular day. (ECPAD)

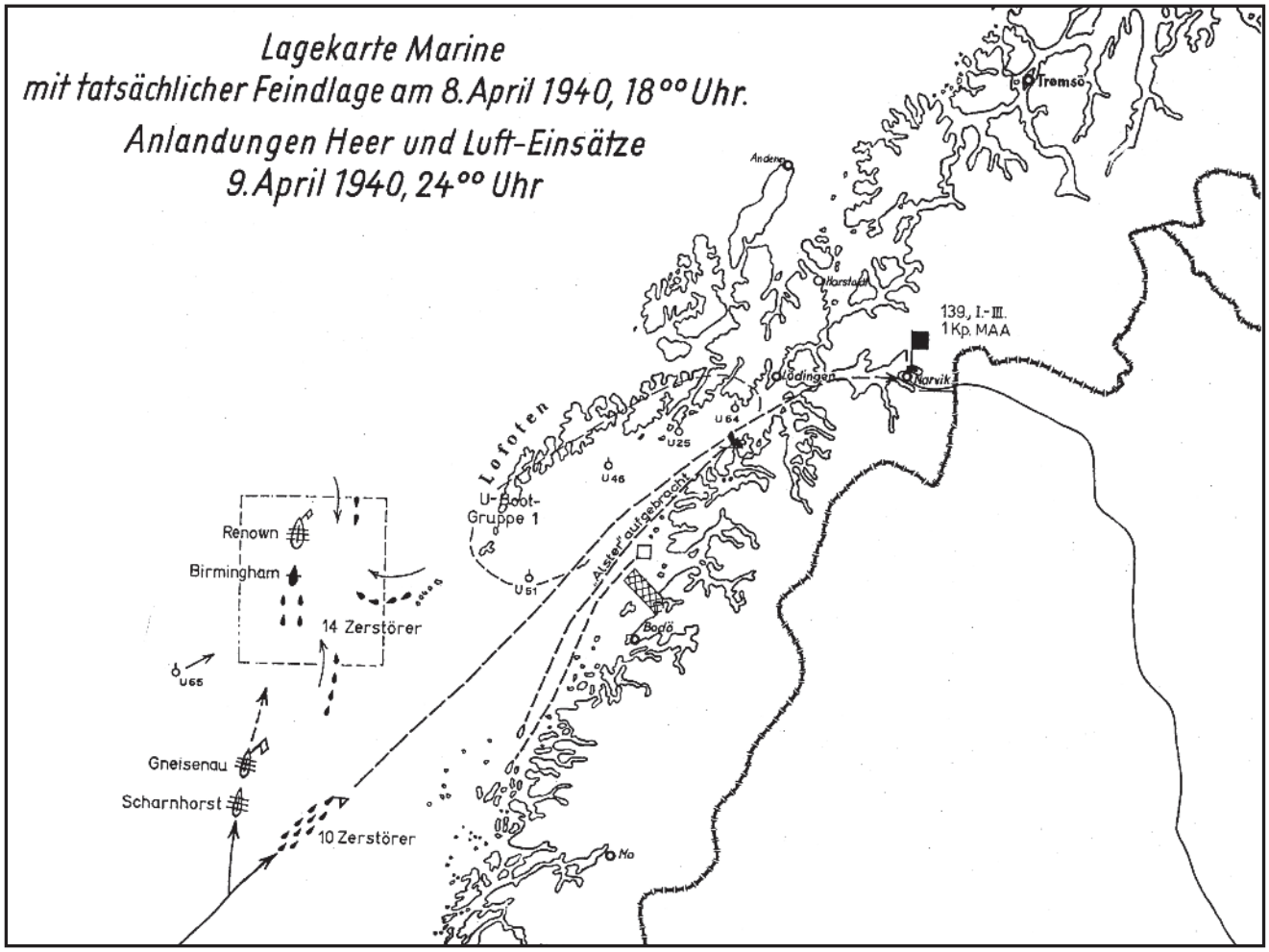
LANDING!

During the early hours of April 9 the German naval squadrons entered the fjords and at 5 a.m. the landings began. Running from north (Narvik) to south, this was the situation at the seven locations assaulted by German forces:

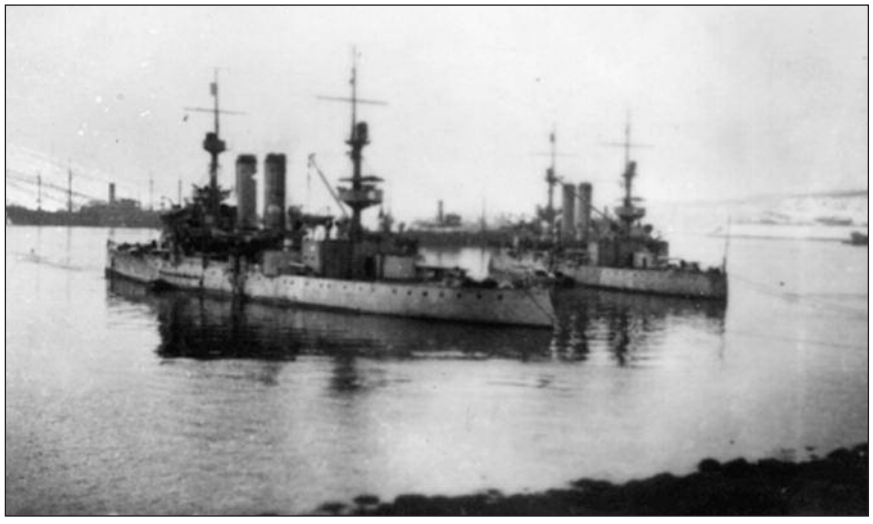
At Narvik, nine destroyers of Kapitän zur See Bonte sailed up the Ofotfjord (the tenth was three-hours late because of damage suffered due to the heavy seas). Three destroyers (*Lüdemann*, *Schmitt* and *von Roeder*) landed troops at Ramnes, 30 kilometres west of Narvik, to capture Norwegian batteries that quickly proved not to exist. Three others (*Zenker*, *Künne* and *Koellner*) sailed up the Herjangen fjord to land troops at Bjerkvik, ten kilometres north of Narvik, to take the Norwegian army depot at Elvegårdsmoen, and the last three (*Heidkamp*, *Thiele* and *Bernd von Arnim*) headed for

This shot from the *Hipper* is often said to have been taken in the early hours of April 9 as Gruppe 2 approached Trondheim but this cannot be true for it was dark when the ships sailed up the fjord. Also, Jean Paul finally found out where this shot has been taken: near Kalddalen, 30 kilometres north of Trondheim. This was much deeper in the fjord and Gruppe 2 did not go anywhere near the place on April 9. These ships are sailing north-eastwards in the direction of the island of Ytterøy so possibly this shot taken on April 10 before *Hipper* left Trondheim that evening to return to Wilhelmshaven by the 12th.

Or was it at the beginning of June when *Hipper* came back to Trondheim for Operation 'Juno'? The presence of snow in the background would seem to support the first conjection. (Bundesarchiv) *Right:* **The Trondheim fjord in 2004, looking south-westwards, with Leksvik at the far end. Eldbjørg Schei of Sea-Sport Yatch, a tour boat company, finally succeeded in reaching the spot in good weather to take this nice comparison for us. (Eldbjørg would be very happy to organise a tour of the fjord for any readers interested. Her E-mail address at Sea-Sport Yacht is: post@ssy.as)**



This map is an extract from a larger map drawn by the Kriegsmarine for an after action report. It shows the four U-Boats of Gruppe 1 (*U-51, U-46, U-25* and *U-64*) deployed near the Lofoten islands to watch over the approaches to Narvik to protect, firstly, the ten destroyers under Kapitän zur See Bonte that sailed to Narvik with the three battalions of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 139; then two of the precursor ships of the Ausfuhr-Staffel en route to Narvik, the *Alster* and *Rauenfels* (the *Alster* was captured by the Royal Navy on April 10 and the *Rauenfels* was sunk that same day); and finally the battleships *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* which had turned northwards in the diversion. As far as the Royal Navy is concerned, this map indicates the minefield (the criss-crossed rectangle) laid in the Vestfjord in the early hours of April 8, and the force under Vice-Admiral Whitworth then comprising the battle-cruiser *Renown,* the cruiser *Birmingham* and 14 destroyers. In the early hours of April 9, the *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* would come across the *Renown* and her escorting destroyers in a snowstorm that severely reduced visibility. Both parties opened fire, *Renown* and *Gneisenau* took some hits but without suffering serious damage.



This picture of the *Eidsvold* and *Norge* at anchor in the harbour at Narvik was taken on April 8, the day before the German attack. The largest ships of the Norwegian navy, and the oldest, the armour on these ironclads was 200mm on the turrets, 150mm in the belt, turret bases and tower, and 50mm on the deck. They were armed with two 210mm, six 150mm and six 76mm guns. The anti-aircraft armament comprised two 76mm guns, two 20mm guns and six machine guns. (Nordland Red Cross War Museum, Narvik)

Narvik. At about 4.15 a.m., in a squally snowstorm, the squadron came across the Norwegian ironclad *Eidsvold* at the entrance to the harbour. In the leading *Wilhelm Heidkamp*, Bonte lowered a small boat and sent an officer across to explain that the Germans were coming to Norway as friends to protect Norwegians against the British. The German officer returned to his ship and Captain Odd Isachsen Willoch called to his superior, Captain Petter Askim, on board *Norge*, the second Norwegian ironclad at Narvik. As Askim ordered Willoch to open fire, the German envoy was called back whereupon Willoch told him that he had orders to resist. The German departed and Captain Willoch ordered the port side battery to open fire but, before it could do so, the *Eidsvold* was hit by three torpedoes from the *Wilhelm Heidkamp*. She quickly broke up into two pieces and sank and only six survivors could be rescued from the freezing water.

Then at 4.40 a.m. the *Norge* spotted the other two German destroyers calmly tying up amidst the other ships moored in the harbour and quickly opened fire with her 210mm and 150mm guns. The *Bernd von Arnim* returned with a series of torpedoes and two of them found their mark. The *Norge* started to list and she went down in less than a minute. Nevertheless, 90 men, nearly half of the crew, were saved.

As the *Wilhelm Heidkamp* and *Bernd von Arnim* dealt with the two Norwegian ironclads, the other German destroyers tied up in the harbour so the Gebirgsjäger could disembark. A sailor on the *Hans Lüdemann* took this picture of some of them feverishly unloading equipment on the jetty. Later in May, after Allied troops had retaken Narvik, the wreck of the disabled *Lüdemann* was boarded and a camera was found on board. It was brought back to England where the exposed film that was inside was developed whereupon this remarkable picture came to light.

As the Gebirgsjäger started to jump ashore from the German destroyers, the surprised Norwegian garrison offered no resistance. As his troops quickly occupied the harbour area and other strategic positions in Narvik, Generalleutnant Eduard Dietl, the commander of the 3. Gebirgs-Division, hurried to meet the local Norwegian commander, Colonel Konrad Bertram Sundlo. At first, the latter announced that he was going to order his troops to open fire in 30 minutes but Dietl managed to convince him that this would only lead to a useless bloodbath. Accepting the advice, at 6.15 a.m., Sundlo turned Narvik over to the invaders, although one battalion of 250 men refused to comply with the order to lay down arms and they escaped eastwards amidst the confusion.

It soon became apparent that none of the three Trojan Horse ships, which should have been ready waiting in the port, had reached Narvik although the large whaling factory ship, *Jan Wellem*, had arrived from Murmansk the day before. The *Bärenfels* had been diverted to Bergen and the *Rauenfels* and *Alster* were still en route. (*Rauenfels* was sunk on April 10 by HMS *Havoc* off Narvik and the *Alster* was taken by HMS *Icarus* the same day off Bodø.) The tanker *Kattegat* was intercepted in the entrance of Ofotfjord by the Norwegian patrol boat *Nordkapp* whereupon her captain decided to scuttle the vessel. (Because of the loss of the *Kattegat*, the ten destroyers of Kapitän zur See Bonte could not be refuelled in time for the pre-planned evening departure to Germany. Two destroyers at a time could be refuelled from the *Jan Wellem* but it took between seven and eight hours for each pair of ships.)

While five destroyers (*Heidkamp*, *Lüdemann*, *Schmitt*, *von Roeder* and *Künne*) moored for the night in the Narvik harbour, three others (*Zenker*, *Giese* and *Koellner*) went to Bjerkvik at the head of Herjangen fjord, ten kilometres north of Narvik, and two (*Thiele* and *Bernd von Arnim*) to the Ballengen bay on the south side of the Ofotfjord, 25 kilometres west of Narvik.

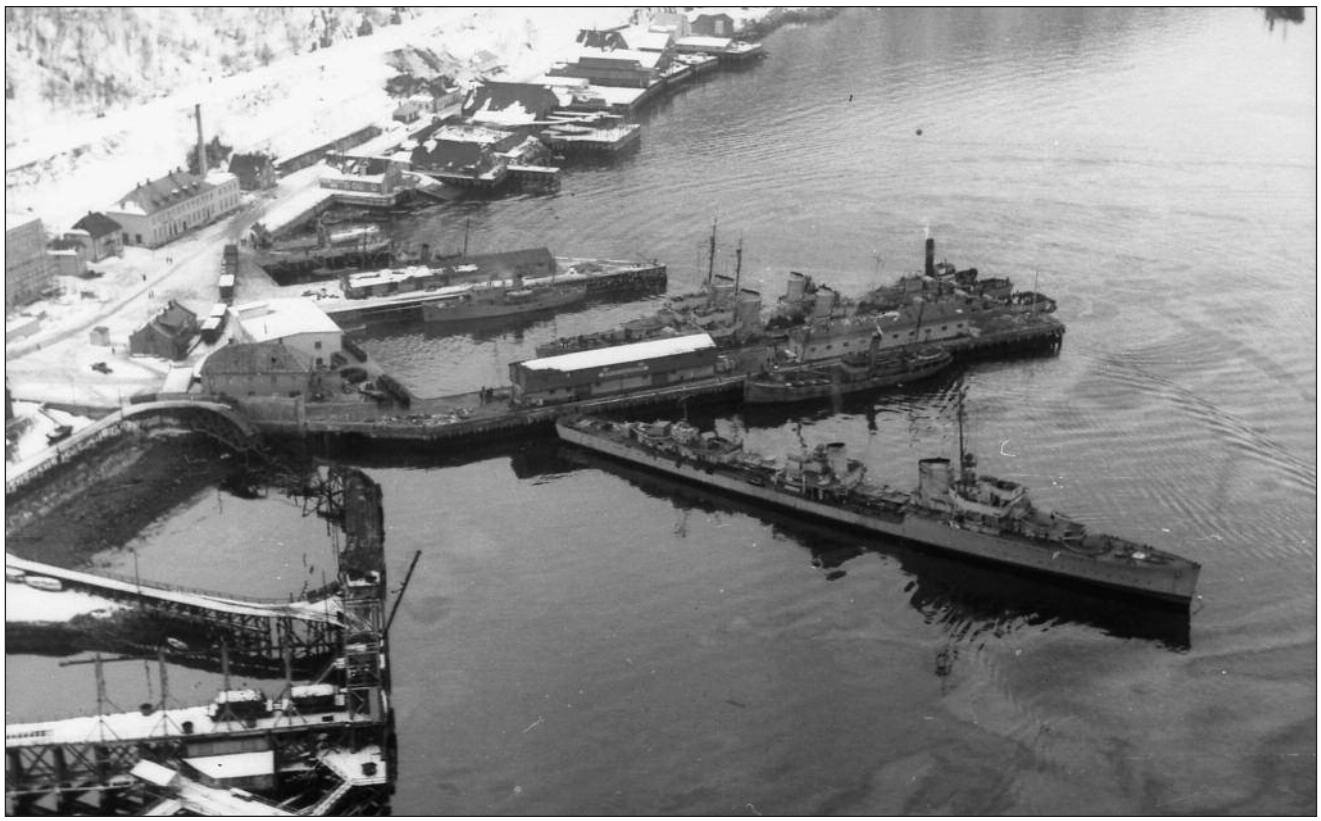
It was a thrilling experience to be there in the quiet harbour, on the exact spot on the actual anniversary in April, quite alone in the cold with snow falling. The end of the jetty has remained the same with even the building on the left still standing. The other building was badly damaged when a British torpedo hit the jetty on April 13 (see page 31) and it was not rebuilt.

At Trondheim the naval squadron under Kapitän zur See Heye in the inner fjord met little resistance from the coastal batteries. The cruiser *Hipper* returned fire and succeeded in obscuring the view of the gunners with smoke and clouds of dust from the explosions until the battle group had passed.

Left: **On April 10, a German photographer took this picture overlooking the same jetty, with the *Lüdemann* (left) tied up on one side and the *Hermann Künne* on the other. The transport sunk just off to the right of the jetty was the *Saphir*, a Norwegian cargo ship.** *Right:* **This comparison shows how one original building on the jetty had survived when the other has gone. We found that the picture had been taken from the hillside behind the harbour, at the top of Administrasjonsveien quite near to the house now occupied by the Ofoten Museum. In the background, across the Beisfjord, lies Ankenes.**

While three destroyers remained behind to land troops and capture the forts, the *Hipper* and the fourth destroyer steamed into Trondheim. The landing and the occupation of the town then took place as scheduled. Here, too, none of the Trojan Horses had arrived as the *Main* was sunk in front of Haugesund by the Norwegian torpedo boat *Draug* on April 9; the *Sao Paulo* went to the bottom after striking a mine off Bergen on the 10th and the tanker *Skagerrak*, intercepted by HMS *Suffolk*, ended up by scuttling herself on April 12. Only the *Levante* finally reached Trondheim on the 13th.

At Bergen Konteradmiral Schmundt's naval squadron came under fire from the Norwegian coastal batteries as it approached. Troops were landed to seize the Kvarven forts but in order to reach Bergen in time the group proceeded without waiting for the capture of the batteries. Consequently, both the



Following the Royal Navy attack on April 10, and the moves to board and refuel using the *Jan Wellem* in the iron ore harbour (at least *Zenker, Koellner, Lüdemann* and *Künne* were refuelled on April 11), the destroyers have now changed their moorings. This picture was taken from a Junkers Ju 90 (the wing of the aircraft can be seen on another frame); thus it could only be on April 12 when one such aircraft reached Narvik before midday and dropped supplies (see pages 26 and 27). *Lüdemann* is still moored at the same place along the jetty but the *Zenker* has now been tied up alongside. The *von Roeder* is now at angle on the far side with her stern up against the jetty. (Bundesarchiv)

Left: **From the quayside, a German photographer took this shot of *von Roeder* with her main armament pointing towards the entrance to the fjord. This class of destroyer was armed with five 127mm guns in single turrets (the two front guns are visible); and four 37mm AA guns in two twin mountings abreast the after funnel. There were also two banks of four torpedo tubes each (the front set can be seen in between the two funnels). From this side, no trace is left of the damage suffered by the ship in the attack on April 10. (ECPAD)** *Right:* **Looking south across the Beisfjord with Ankenes in the background.**

Königsberg and the *Bremse* were damaged by Norwegian fire — three hits on the first, one on the second. However the landing of the two battalions of the 69. Infanterie-Division took place as planned as did the occupation of the harbour and town. Next morning, the Germans captured the coastal batteries and seaplane transports started to ferry in more troops but, of the transport ships, only the *Marie Leonhardt* finally reached port for, as we have seen, the *Rio de Janeiro* had been sunk on April 8 by the Polish submarine *Orzel*. The *Curityba* was delayed by grounding near Helsingborg whereupon she was diverted on Oslo, so the *Bärenfels*, which should have gone to Narvik, was instead switched to Bergen. (She would be sunk there during an air raid on April 14.)

At Stavanger, one parachute company jumped as planned on Sola aerodrome at 8.45 a.m. after preparatory strafing and dive-bombing of the defences. The paratroopers met stiff resistance but quickly dismantled the barbed-wire barriers that the Norwegians had erected across the runway. They then marched on Stavanger itself where they occupied strategic positions while transport aircraft landed and progressively brought in the I. and II. Bataillons of Infanterie-Regiment 193. Luftwaffe ground staff and command elements also arrived, quickly converting Sola into an operational base, bringing in 120 aircraft on W-Tag loaded with fuel, ammunition and anti-aircraft units. The Trojan Horse *Roda* entered the fjord only to be promptly despatched by the Norwegian torpedo boat *Æger* which, in turn, was hit by the Luftwaffe later in the day and was beached. As scheduled, the transports *Tübingen*, *Tijuca* and *Mendoza* arrived during the afternoon of W-Tag. On the following day, more transport aircraft landed at Sola and started to bring in the III. Bataillon of Infanterie-Regiment 193.

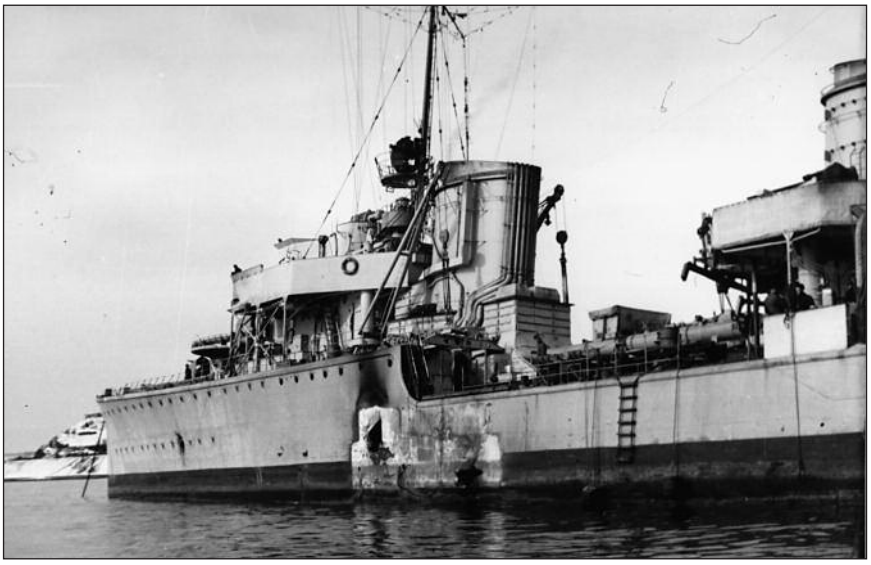
At Kristiansand, the naval squadron under Kapitän zur See Rieve arrived somewhat late, delayed by thick fog. It also ran into fire from coastal batteries so that the troops did not begin off-loading until noon. Two Norwegian submarines and two destroyers, the *Gyller* and the *Odin*, were seized intact (later they were taken into Kriegsmarine service). Also delayed by the fog was the *Greif* which reached Arendal late morning so the telephone cable to England was not cut before noon. As for the follow-up transports, the *Kreta* was torpedoed in the Kattegat on April 9 but the *Wigand*, *Westsee* and *August Leonhard* all reached Kristiansand.

At Egersund, the small squadron led by Korvettenkapitän Thoma entered the port without a problem and the 150-man party was quickly put ashore as engineers cut the telephone cable to Scotland.

The photographer then went on board *von Roeder* and took this shot of the after deck house from beside the rear set of torpedo tubes. One of the 127mm guns can be seen pointing towards the entrance of the fjord. (ECPAD)

Looking eastwards from the jetty, with the Fagernesfjellet mountain perfectly in place in the background, makes for a beautiful comparison.

The first battle of Narvik. The visibility was poor early on the morning of April 10 and the British squadron comprising *Hardy*, *Hunter*, *Havock*, *Hostile* and *Hotspur* negotiated Ofotfjord completely unnoticed, catching the Germans at Narvik completely off guard. At 4.30 a.m. (British time), while *Hostile* and *Hotspur* held back in order to safeguard the approaches, the first three destroyers launched a gun and torpedo attack on the five German destroyers lying at anchor in the harbour. The *Schmitt* was hit by two torpedoes and went down where it lay. Another torpedo blew away the stern part of *Heidkamp*, killing Käpitan zur See Bonte and 81 of the crew, and gun-fire badly damaged *von Roeder* *(right)*. Towards 6 a.m., just as the British destroyers had completed their third attack and were about to retire, *Zenker*, *Giese* and *Koellner* arrived from Herjangen fjord to the north-east. In poor visibility they opened fire from 6,500 metres; the British replied and a running battle developed.



***Thiele* and *Bernd von Arnim* then appeared out of the mist, coming up the Ofotfjord from the Ballangen fjord, ahead of the British squadron, and they, too, opened fire. *Thiele* hit the *Hardy* from 4,000 metres with her fourth salvo and repeatedly thereafter and the burning *Hardy* was forced to beach herself at Skjomnes, on the southern side of the Ofotfjord. The crew managed to scramble ashore only for the wounded Captain Warburton-Lee to die on the beach. *Hunter* was hit by gun-fire, then torpedoed, and finally accidentally rammed by *Hotspur*, herself damaged. *Hotspur* managed to extricate herself but *Hunter* sank in mid-fjord. *Zenker*, *Giese* and *Koellner* briefly pursued the three retreating British destroyers down Ofotfjord but they were short on fuel and Fregattenkapitän Erich Bey had to break off the pursuit. The German destroyers then retired to Narvik to lick their wounds. *Above:* This we believe might be the *Erich Giese.* The badly damaged *Heidkamp* finally sank at her mooring on April 11 when a sudden explosion occurred on board.**

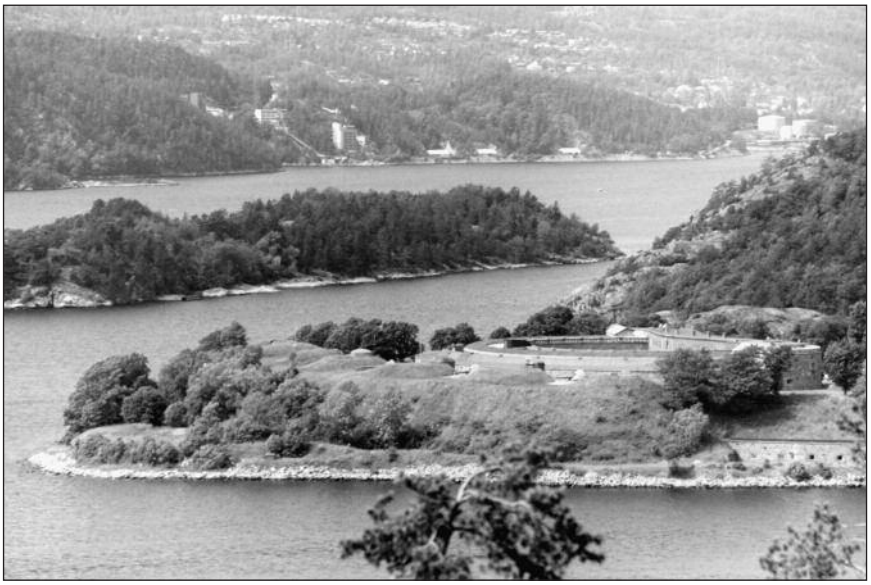
This view looking westwards towards the entrance of Beisfjord, with the iron ore harbour in the right background, is a comparison for both the pictures above.

FAILURE AT OSLO

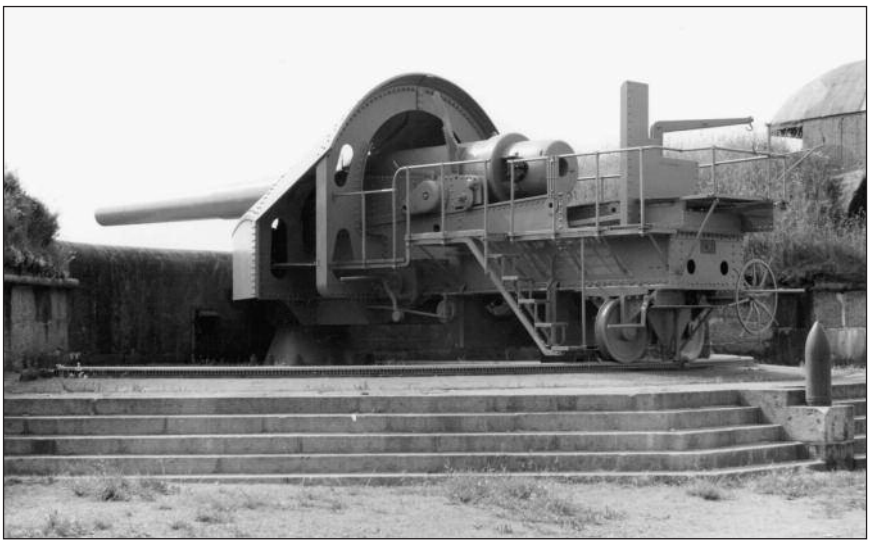
The Norwegians had a few patrol boats out at the mouth of Oslofjord on the night of April 8/9 so the Germans planned to trick them by sending the following message: 'Am putting in with permission of Norwegian Government. Escorting officer on board.' However the Norwegians were not fooled and they quickly radioed the alarm to have all the lighthouses in the fjord switched off. Sometime after midnight (German time), one patrol boat on the outer guard line of the Oslofjord, the *Pol III*, came within sight of the German squadron. The Norwegian vessel fired warning shots and the Germans dispatched the torpedo boat *Albatros* to deal with her. The Norwegian vessel then unintentionally rammed the German as she approached. As the two ships were side by side, words were exchanged before they separated whereupon the *Albatros* opened fire. When *Pol III* started sinking the Germans rescued its crew of 14 who became the first prisoners of the campaign. The wounded Norwegian captain, Leif Welding Olsen, was drowned when the crew abandoned ship.

As surprise had been lost, the captain of the *Lützow*, Kapitän zur See August Thiele, proposed that they proceed up the fjord at a faster speed before all the lighthouses were doused, but Konteradmiral Kummetz decided to keep on according to the plan and maintain the pretence of a peaceful force. The most dangerous point was at Drøbak where the fjord was only about 600 metres wide. The Norwegians had several forts protecting the narrows, among them the Oscarsborg fortress comprising three 280mm guns emplaced on an island in the fjord, the Kopås battery on the eastern bank with three 150mm guns, the Husvik battery on this same bank with two 57mm guns, and a fourth on the western side at Nesset with two 57mm guns (although these latter batteries played no part in the resulting action).

When the *Blücher* led the German ships into the narrows, the commander of the Oscarsborg fortress, Colonel Birger Kristian Eriksen, gave the order to open fire using the two 280mm guns that he had been able to man. It was 5.21 a.m. (German time). The two rounds hit the *Blücher* at a range of about 500 metres with devastating effect. One penetrated a storeroom containing fuel for the Arado Ar 196 seaplane and started a huge fire and the second hit the anti-aircraft control centre. Then the Kopås 150mm battery opened up, causing further damage. The *Blücher* maintained station but she soon passed in front of three torpedo tubes set on Nordre Kaholmen island. She was hit twice and began to list to starboard. She was



This picture taken from the eastern bank of the Drøbak narrow shows the Oscarsborg fortress on Søndre Kaholmen island in the middle of Oslofjord. On April 9, the *Blücher* passed from left to right through the channel in the foreground, heading for Oslo, when it was shelled and torpedoed. (J-B. Wahl)



This is one of the two 280mm guns that opened fire at the *Blücher* (the fortress comprised three guns). Built by Krupp in 1892, these guns had a built-in crane (visible on the right) to raise the 600lb shells to the breach. (J-B Wahl)

Left: **When first published in the book *Entscheidende Stunden* in 1942, this picture was printed without a detailed caption but, thanks to Jan Egil Fjørtoft and Jean-Bernard Wahl, experts on Norwegian fortifications, we were able to pin it down to the Drøbak narrows. It then appeared that the picture had been printed the wrong way round in the wartime publication as the gun should not be pointing to left as shown in the book, but to right as shown here! This was one of the three 150mm guns of the Kopås battery.** *Right:* **The emplacement has now been completely rebuilt and we took this comparison a little to the south. The small island in the fjord (near the muzzle of the gun) is the clue.**

Braving the fire of Norwegian machine guns, the first Ju 52s landed at Oslo's Fornebu airport about 8.30 a.m. and quickly taxied to the western end where the Norwegian fire could not reach them. In any case the Norwegians soon ran out of ammunition and at about 9 a.m. they abandoned the airfield to assemble at Lysaker on the way to the capital. (Bundesarchiv)

abandoned and 1,500 aboard escaped safely, having reached either the eastern shore or an island in the middle of the fjord before her magazine blew up at 6.30 a.m. The *Blücher* rolled over and sank one hour later, the death toll being over 300 — 125 men from the crew and 195 from the assault troops on board (see *After the Battle* No. 101).

Faced with this setback, the rest of the squadron turned around. The *Lützow* and *Albatros* started to put troops ashore at Son and Moss at 7 a.m. on the eastern side of the fjord.

In Oslo, shortly before 5 a.m., Kurt Bräuer, the German diplomat in Oslo, delivered a document to the Norwegian Foreign Minister, a 13-point ultimatum demanding unconditional capitulation. Koht retired to consider the matter before informing Bräuer half an hour later that his government rejected the ultimatum. Ninety minutes later, the government and the deputies, together with King Håkon and Crown Prince Olav, boarded a train at the eastern railway station and left for Hamar, a town 150 kilometres north of Oslo.

Heavy fog covered the Skagerrak in the morning causing most of the 29 Ju 52s bringing in the paratroopers of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 1 to abort and land instead at Aalborg in Denmark which had already been captured by the regiment's 4. Kompanie. Only a few aircraft continued towards Oslo together with the squadron of eight Messerschmitt Bf 110s that were to support the assault. Gladiators of the Norwegian fighter squadron based at Fornebu had first taken off at 5 a.m. and five were in the air when the first German aircraft arrived at 7.35 a.m. Although there is no positive evidence as to how many aircraft were shot down by the Gladiators, two Bf 110s and two Ju 52s appear to have been lost.

The Bf 110s strafed the anti-aircraft defences at the airfield and destroyed two Gladiators on the ground. A Ju 52 attempted to land at 8.19 a.m. but it was hit by machine-gun fire forcing the pilot to abort the landing. Hauptmann Richard Wagner, the commander of the first wave of the airlift, was killed on board and the aircraft flew back to Denmark.

The Germans took control of the aerodrome and from 10.30 a.m. the follow-up transport aircraft began to arrive. The control tower was at the time still being constructed. (Bundesarchiv)

Fornebu, once Oslo's main airport, closed down in 1998 and the area is now under redevelopment as a business park.

Due to fog, the Ju 52s carrying the paratroops bound for Fornebu had to abort and return to Aalborg. After refuelling, they returned that afternoon by which time the airfield was in German hands so there was no necessity to jump. (Bundesarchiv)

A second Ju 52 then landed and quickly taxied to the western end of the airfield where the soldiers exited the aircraft. A Bf 110 landed some minutes later followed by more Ju 52s. The Norwegian forces at Fornebu withdrew about 9 a.m. and from 10.30 a.m. the main force of the German follow-up air units began to touch down.

In the afternoon, the two parachute companies originally bound for Fornebu returned from Aalborg after the aircraft had been refuelled. The Germans soon advanced towards Oslo and a small force had reached the city centre by midday. Aided by confusion and the Luftwaffe activities overhead, the Germans were able to bluff the commander of the garrison into a formal surrender which was signed that afternoon.

About that time the first troops who had come ashore some distance to the south reached Oslo. At the same time, transport aircraft progressively brought in the I. and II. Bataillons of Infanterie-Regiment 324 together with a company of engineers.

Meanwhile Generalmajor Erwin Engelbrecht, the commander of the 163. Infanterie-Division, who was supposed to take command of the troops in Oslo, had failed to arrive at the appointed time. He was travelling on the *Blücher* and although he had reached the shore he had fallen into Norwegian hands. Therefore Bräuer and the staff of the German legation acted on their own. They met Quisling and agreed to contact Berlin to obtain permission to let him appoint a cabinet and exercise power.

Late in the day the Germans discovered that the King and his government had left Oslo so Hauptmann Eberhard Spiller, the German air attaché, taking command of a strong force of paratroopers, started out north in four buses hoping to intercept them. However, some time after 7.30 p.m., news of the pursuit reached the official party so they quickly left Hamar by train for Elverum, 30 kilometres to the north-east. Norwegian forces set up road-blocks between Hamar and Elverum and the German convoy reached the one at Midtskogen around midnight. Dismounting from the buses, the Germans opened fire but the Norwegians were solidly entrenched and the assailants were compelled to withdraw with heavy losses. Spiller fell mortally wounded and in his pocket was a list of the people to be arrested. Returning the way they had come, the paratroopers surprised a Norwegian infantry battalion moving north which they promptly captured and disarmed.

Sic transit Gloria. The historic airport which served the Norwegian capital is no more having been replaced by Gardermoen, 35 kilometres north of the city. The basement of the old tower is now a staff canteen. We visited the airfield on a Sunday when there was no one around but, while it was thrilling to wander about alone, our activities were being monitored and a security vehicle soon arrived to see what we were up to.

Left: **From Fornebu, the Germans began to advance towards Oslo reaching Lysaker about 11 a.m. at which point the Norwegian platoon there withdrew. The unhindered advance was resumed and at half past twelve the leaders reached the heart of the capital. Talks were entered into with the commander of the garrison and at 2 p.m. he agreed to surrender all the forces under his command. (Bundesarchiv)** *Right:* **This picture was taken at the eastern end of Drammensveien, near the Slottet (Royal Palace).**

Following approval being received from Berlin to install him as the Norwegian head of state, Vidkun Quisling's broadcast that evening added a new word to the dictionary of traitorship: 'Quisling'. He announced that as the Nygaardsvold government had fled, a national government headed by himself had now assumed responsibility. He ordered all officers of the armed forces to take their orders exclusively from the new government. Rumours soon spread of an imminent Allied bombing raid which led to a panic and a mass exodus from the city.

The surrender of the Oscarsborg fort was agreed on the morning of April 10 leaving the way open for the ships that had been held up to get underway, and the *Lützow*, *Emdem* and *Möwe* and the minesweepers of the 1. R-Boots-Flotille reached Oslo port by 10.45 a.m. Generalmajor Engelbrecht then took temporary charge until General von Falkenhorst, the commander of Gruppe XXI and commander-in-chief of Weserübung Nord, arrived the following day.

The *Muansa*, *Itauri* and the *Neidenfels* arrived in Oslo on schedule on the 11th, bringing the first echelons of men and material for the 196. Infanterie-Division, but the *Antares* and the *Jonia* were lost, sunk by British submarines. As for the second group of 11 ships, the *Wigbert* and the *Friedenau* had been torpedoed by HMS *Triton* but the nine other ships reached their destination.

The Kriegsmarine quickly recalled its battleships to safer waters but by now the British had recovered from being upstaged so cleverly and submarines of the Royal Navy began to redress the balance. Having dropped off her troops, the *Karlsruhe* left Kristiansand at 7 p.m. on April 9 but she was soon torpedoed by HMS *Truant*. Badly hit, all efforts to save her failed, and she was finished off by the torpedo boat *Greif*.

At Bergen, the *Königsberg* was hit during the morning of April 10 by three 500lb bombs dropped by Skuas of No. 800 and No. 803 Squadrons which had flown a 600-mile round trip from the Orkneys. It soon became clear that she could not be saved and her crew abandoned ship. The *Königsberg* capsized to port and sank later in the morning, the first major warship to be sunk in the Second World War by air attack.

The cruiser *Lützow* sailed from Oslo on the evening of the 10th but she was torpedoed the same night by the submarine *Spearfish*. The torpedo put her screw and rudder out of service and caused major leaks and at first it appeared doubtful if the ship could be saved. Most of the crew were taken off and plans made to scuttle the cruiser, but when the salvage parties finally brought the flooding under control, she was taken in tow to Kiel where she arrived on April 13.

The first echelon of the seaborne reinforcements arrived on April 11, right on schedule, bringing in Flak batteries, and the Germans lost no time in getting these in position. This 20mm has been emplaced on high ground overlooking the harbour.

This picture was taken from the side of the Ekeberg hill, east of central Oslo. The islands in the background are Sjursøya (left), Langøyene (the twin islands in the centre) and Bleikøya (right).

Left: **The first five panzers sent to Oslo were lost when the *Antares* was torpedoed on April 10 by the submarine *Sunfish* but other ships duly brought in more tanks from Panzer-Abteilung z.b.V. 40. Here, stunned Norwegians look on in distressed amazement from an overpass as two PzKpfw I parade through their capital. (Bundesarchiv)** *Right:* **We found that this picture had been taken on Henrik Ibsen Street from the corner of Arbeidersamfundets Place. Møllergata crosses on the overpass in the background.**

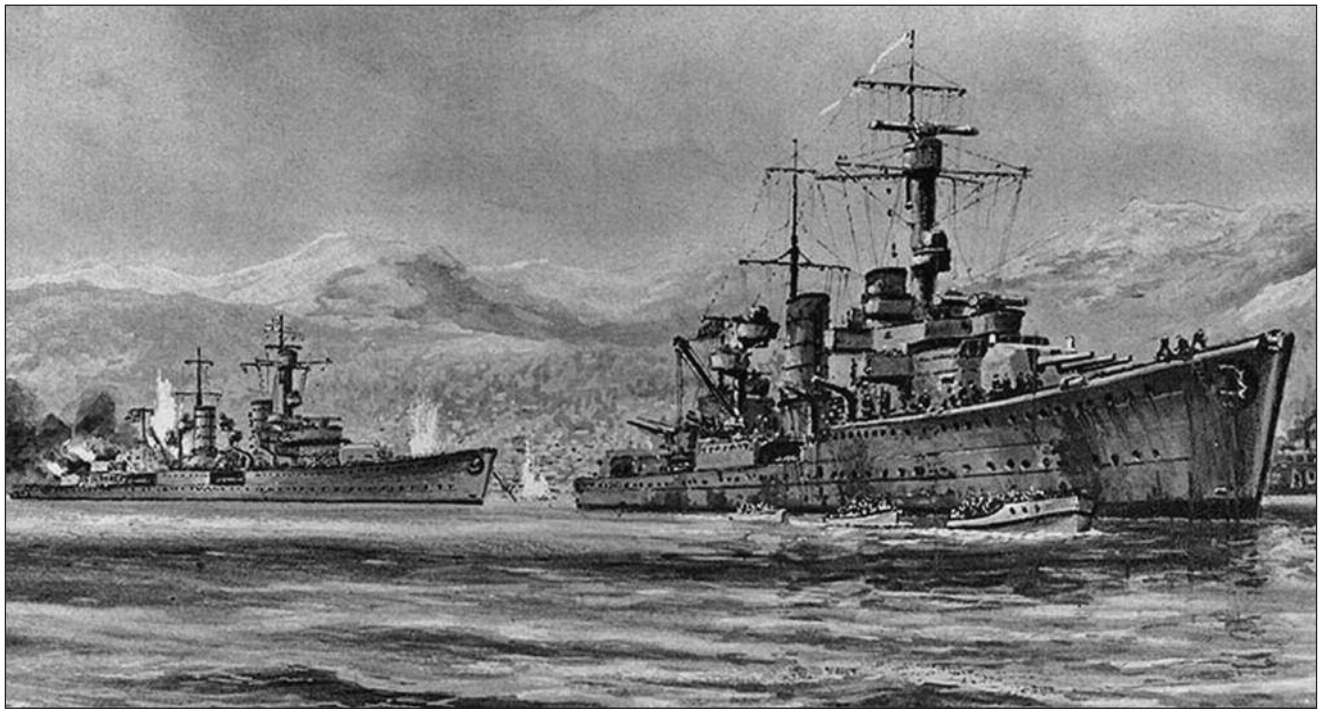
Another column of tanks from the same unit, although this time they are PzKpfw IIs armed with one KwK30 20mm gun and one MG34 machine gun. This is Kirkeveien. (Bundesarchiv)

The *Admiral Hipper* and the *Köln* both left Norway on the evening of the 10th, the former from Trondheim, the latter from Bergen, reaching Wilhelmshaven during the evening of the 12th. The *Hipper* went into the dockyard to repair the damage suffered when she was rammed by HMS *Glowworm*.

The battleships *Gneisenau* and the *Scharnhorst* were still sailing northwards to create the diversion when they came across battlecruiser *Renown* and her escorting destroyers in the early hours of April 9. Both sides opened fire in snow squalls that made the visibility quite poor. *Renown* was hit twice, without causing serious damage, while the *Gneisenau* took three hits, one of which knocked out her main battery director control. Using their superior speed, the two German ships then disappeared over the northern horizon. They continued in a northerly direction for some time before turning west and later south. Without being seen, they passed to the west of the Home Fleet and arrived at Wilhelmshaven without further incident on the evening of April 12 whereupon the *Gneisenau* immediately went into the dockyard to repair the damage received on the 10th.

In spite of the failure to capture King Håkon and his government, the daring Operation 'Weserübung' had been a complete success and the major ports of Norway had all been taken with only token losses.

Kirkeveien . . . then and now. Situated in the western outskirts of Oslo, this street runs in front of the famous Vigeland sculpture park, just off the picture to the right.



Konteradmiral Schmundt's squadron came under fire from coastal batteries as it approached Bergen during the early morning of April 9 but nevertheless the landing of the assault troops took place as planned. As events unfolded during the day, one RAF sighting reportedly placed two German cruisers in Bergen. They were within the range of the Skuas based at Hatston in the Orkneys so a dawn attack was set in motion. *Above:* **This artist's impression by Adolf Bock depicting the cruisers *Köln* and *Königsberg* landing troops at Bergen appeared in a book published in Berlin during the war.**

ALLIED REACTION

When news of the German landings in Norway arrived in London and Paris on the morning of April 9, it became clear that Hitler had not 'missed the bus' as Chamberlain had just proclaimed. The daring coup had succeeded and most of the Norwegian ports were in German hands. In London, the War Cabinet met that morning and decided to mount an immediate operation to recapture Bergen and Trondheim, and to occupy Narvik. At that point it was not known that the Germans had also taken Narvik — that only became clear at noon from a broadcast from Oslo.

A Franco-British Supreme War Council was held at 10 Downing Street during the afternoon at which the French reiterated that the Allies' main purpose should still be to cut off Germany's ore supplies, hence the main objective should be Narvik. Under the insistence of the French, priority was therefore shifted to Narvik and the Trondheim operation was finally cancelled that evening. Surprisingly, the Chiefs-of-Staff were also instructed to take into consideration the possibility 'of establishing a foothold by Allied forces at Namsos and Åndalsnes'.

Meanwhile, Vice-Admiral Geoffrey Layton's force of four cruisers and seven destroyers was proceeding to carry out orders to 'force their way into Bergen' and the ships reached the entrance of Korsfjord during the afternoon. The Luftwaffe greeted them in force, 41 He 111s from KG 26 attacking in concert with 47 Ju 88s from KG 30, and succeeded in sinking HMS *Gurkha* and damaging three cruisers, the *Devonshire*, *Glasgow* and *Southampton*. So when air reconnaissance confirmed the presence of two German cruisers at Bergen, the Admiralty decided to cancel the operation. While three cruisers — the *Galatea*, the *Arethusa* and the French *Emile Bertin* — maintained station off Bergen with two destroyers, the rest of the force withdrew to the north-west.

Early the following morning, April 10, in an operation conducted by the 2nd Destroyer Flotilla at Narvik commanded by Captain Bernard A. W. Warburton-Lee, five destroyers steamed out of the morning mist into Ofotfjord and caught the German destroyers dispersed there off guard. In the subsequent battle the *Anton Schmitt* was

Taking off at 5 a.m. on April 10, the 16 Skuas of Nos. 800 and 803 Squadrons departed in two waves, each aircraft armed with one 500lb bomb. Landfall was made south of Bergen at 6.55 a.m. at which point the formation turned to approach the harbour from the south-east, up sun. As the Skuas began their attack at 7.20 a.m. from 9,000 feet they found the *Königsberg* still tied up on the Skoltegrunn mole. Over the course of ten minutes, three hits and one close miss set the German cruiser on fire and killed 18 of her crew. The pumps were out of action due to the loss of electrical power so the flooding could not be controlled nor the fire contained. The crew were forced to abandon ship and just under three hours after the attack the cruiser rolled over and sank. On the return flight one of the Skuas spun into the sea. (ECPAD)

In the first wave of Operation 'Rupert' — the recapture of Narvik — on April 15, the 24th Guards Brigade landed at Harstad on the eastern coast of Hinnøya, the innermost of the Lofoten-Vesterålen islands. Moored in the background is HMS *Effingham*. (IWM)

sunk and *Diether von Roeder* and *Wilhelm Heidkamp* were seriously damaged and sinking. Käpitan zur See Bonte had been killed on board. On the British side, the *Hunter* was hit by gun-fire, then torpedoed and finally rammed by *Hotspur*, herself seriously damaged. *Hotspur* managed to extract herself, but *Hunter* sank. The *Hardy* was seriously damaged and had to be run aground at Vidrek. Captain Warburton-Lee died of his wounds on the beach.

In Paris meanwhile, Premier Paul Reynaud enthusiastically assured the French deputies that 'the road of Swedish iron ore to Germany has been severed, and will remain severed'.

Kurt Bräuer, the German minister in Oslo, arrived at Elverum in the afternoon of April 10 and King Håkon VII and Foreign Minister Koht received him in the communal school. Bräuer demanded the immediate dismissal of the Nygaardsvold government and asked the King to appoint Quisling to form a new cabinet. Having conferred with his government, King Håkon refused and Bräuer, who had in the meantime returned to Oslo, was informed of the Norwegian decision by telephone in the evening.

Looking south-eastwards from Hagebyvegen Street gives this near-perfect comparison of the harbour overlooked by new blocks of flats and a new shipyard.

Left: **Sometime later in May, War Office photographer Bishop H. Marshall took this publicity shot of men of the 2nd South Wales Borderers enjoying cups of tea with their bread and cheese down in the old harbour. (IWM)** *Right:* **Harstad harbour on a peaceful spring morning in April 2004. Here we are on Rikard Kaarbøs Street.**

Left: **In the second wave the French 27ème Demi-Brigade de Chasseurs (three battalions) landed from April 27 and the third wave, consisting of two battalions of the 13ème Demi-Brigade de Légion Etrangère and four battalions of the Polish Brigade, came ashore from May 7. Marshall pictured this Polish motorcycle patrol in action at Borkenes. (IWM)** *Right:* **Jean Paul pinpointed the location which was in fact 15 kilometres west of Harstad, on the road by the sea on the western coast of Hinnøya island.**

That same afternoon, the Norwegian government decided to replace the commander-in-chief of the army, General Kristian Laake, whose competence appeared lacking at this critical moment. His successor, General Otto Ruge, immediately assumed command and he issued his first order early next morning: 'Contain the German onslaught with all available means. Isolate Oslo completely by setting up road-blocks as close as possible to the capital.' His strategy was to hold the Germans in the southern part of the country to allow time for a general mobilisation in the interior and a gradual retreat to the north-west where he could count on assistance from the British and French.

On the 11th Churchill attempted to defuse criticism levelled at the government, insisting in a Commons debate that the 'strict observance of neutrality by Norway has been a contributory cause to the sufferings to which she is now exposed and to the limits of the aid which we can give her'. Meanwhile, at Scapa Flow five transports started to embark the six battalions allocated to the Narvik operation — three from the 24th Guards Brigade and three from the 146th Brigade — as each arrived. Their equipment was hastily stacked on board in no semblance of order, which added even more confusion for it had already been roughly handled during the hasty disembarkation some days previously.

The commander of the operation, now code-named 'Rupert', was Major-General P. J. Mackesy, and he left Scapa Flow on board the cruiser *Southampton* early on the afternoon of the 12th with two companies of the 1st Scots Guards and with orders to establish a base at Harstad and make preparations for an offensive on Narvik. Meanwhile, at about the same time as Mackesy left Scapa Flow, the naval commander, Admiral of the Fleet William the Earl of Cork and Orrery, set sail from Rosyth on the cruiser *Aurora*. His instructions were to expel the Germans from Narvik — a Norwegian estimate was that there were 1,500 to 2,000 in the town — with the least possible delay.

However everything was back into the melting pot on the morning of April 13 when Lord Halifax came out in favour of an immediate operation against Trondheim. General Ironside strongly objected, stating that no troops were available, but by the end of the afternoon the War Cabinet decided to take Trondheim as well as Narvik, the exact opposite of the conclusions reached the day before!

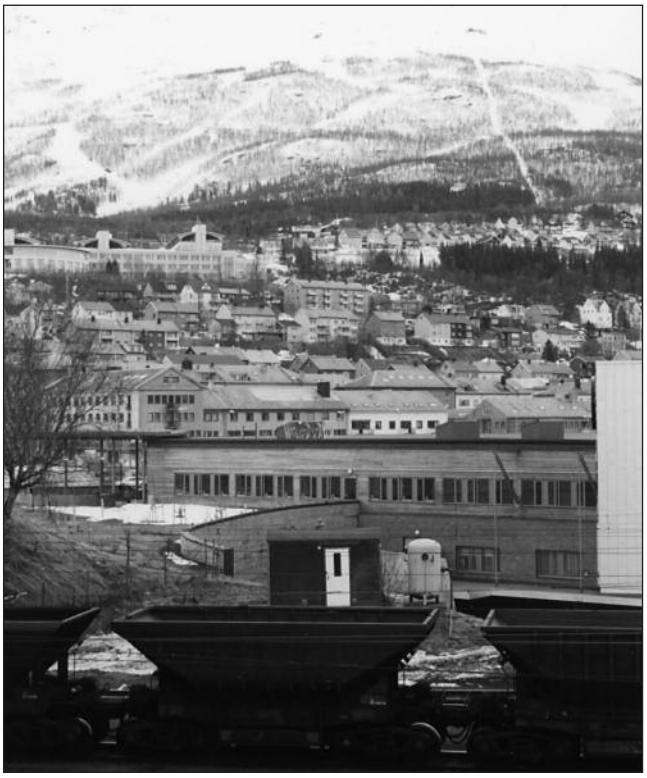
Late that afternoon Vice-Admiral Withworth victoriously cabled London that his squadron had engaged and destroyed the seven German destroyers remaining at Narvik. That morning the battleship *Warspite* and nine destroyers had entered Ofotfjord and attacked the German naval force

The French came in with one company of Hotchkiss H-39 tanks: the 342ème Compagnie de Chars, with 15 tanks in four platoons of three tanks each plus one command tank and two reserves. Brought in from Brest via Greenock on the *Alberte Leborgne*, the armour was landed at Hartstad on May 8. This picture was actually taken later in May when, following the general order to evacuate, two of the Hotchkiss tanks had reached the landing stage (in the background) at 'Steinland' to be loaded from there. (IWM)

After a long search, Jean Paul found that the picture had been taken not at 'Steinland', but at Steinstand on the mainland, 20 kilometres south of Harstad. The narrow channel that separates Hinnøya island from the mainland is called the Tjeldsundet. In the background lies the mountain on Hinnøya island.

Due to the distance from the nearest airfield at Trondheim — some 900 kilometres — the Germans could not provide much close air support for their men trapped in Narvik. At first only long-range four-engined aircraft could fly up to drop ammunition. One Focke-Wulf FW 200 flew the first supply mission in the evening of April 11 and a Ju 90 the second next morning. This picture was taken about 11.30 a.m. just as the latter aircraft flew over the harbour and the town to check for the proper drop zone. It was during one of these circuits that the crew took shots of the destroyers in the harbour (see page 15). (ECPAD)

Left: **Under a magnifying glass the aircraft markings appear to be 'KH + XA'. If so, this would indicate that the machine was carrying the Luftwaffe codes of the former civilian 'Sachsen' of Lufthansa, the Junkers Ju 90 V4. (ECPAD)** *Right:* **Our comparison was taken looking south-westwards from the bridge over the ore railway line (the iron railings are still the same) with Beisfjord and Ankenes in the background.**



Left: **The lone Ju 90 finally dropped its containers over the flat ground alongside the railway, right in the centre of Narvik. (ECPAD)** *Right:* **The weather was poor when we took our comparison in April 2004 so the top of the Fagernesfjellet mountain has disappeared behind the clouds. In the background, across the main Kongensgate, is the Nordland Red Cross War Museum. Its display covers the Narvik campaign of 1940, at sea, on land and in the air. Among the exhibits are an anchor recovered from the *Eidsvold* sunk in the harbour and a Hotchkiss tank (although not a veteran of the battle). (E-mail address: kmmu@online.no)**

German troops struggled through the snow to move the containers up to the road where they were loaded into a commandeered lorry. Most of the men here were mountain troops, but a sailor from one of the scuttled destroyers can be seen lending a hand. This is another view from the bridge, looking south-westwards along the railway line. (ECPAD)

SKÅNLAND
BOGEN
BJERKVIK
SWEDEN
TÅRSTAD
NARVIK
BJØRNFJELL STATION
VIDREK
BEISFJORD
BALLANGEN

SHIPS SUNK IN THE BATTLE OF NARVIK

1. *Erich Köllner*
2. *Hunter* (British)
3. *Hardy* (British)
4. *Anton Schmitt*
5. *Wilhelm Heidkamp*
6. *Eidsvold* (Norwegian)
7. *Diether von Röder*
8. *Erich Giese*
9. *Norge* (Norwegian)
10. *Hermann Kunne*
11. *U-64*
12. *Grom* (Polish)
13. *Georg Thiele*
14. *Wolfgang Zenker*
15. *Bernd von Arnim*
16. *Hans Ludemann*

KILOMETRES
10 5 0 10 20

April 13: the second battle of Narvik. The Admiralty now issued orders for the despatch of the *Warspite,* together with a strong force of destroyers, to attack the German warships and shore batteries at Narvik. Admiral Withworth transferred his flag to the *Warspite* and the squadron sailed up Vestfjord with nine destroyers in the lead — *Bedouin, Eskimo, Cossack, Punjabi, Hero, Icarus, Forester, Foxhound* and *Kimberley*. Some time after midday the Swordfish from the *Warspite* reported two German ships manoeuvring in the Ofotfjord some 20 miles west of Narvik. It was the *Erich Künne* escorting the crippled *Hermann Koellner*. She had run aground on April 11, ripping her bottom open and flooding two boiler rooms. Their destination was Tårstad, an advance position to lie in ambush for the expected Royal Navy attack. While *Künne* exchanged fire with the British squadron, *Koellner* limped into Djupvik Bay on the south side of the fjord. *Bedouin, Eskimo* and *Punjabi* then rounded the point north of Djupvik whereupon both sides opened fire. The immobile *Koellner* fired her last two torpedoes before being repeatedly hit, forcing her captain to scuttle her. In Narvik, only *Zenker, von Arnim* and *Lüdemann* could raise steam in time to join the *Künne*. The four ships then engaged the leading British destroyers, opening fire just before 1 p.m. about a dozen miles west of Narvik. After nearly an hour of trading shot for shot, without causing much damage on either side, the German ships were running short of ammunition so Fregattenkapitän Bey sent the order to retire into the Rombak fjord.

A German photographer stationed on the high ground on the eastern side of Narvik took a series of pictures of the British squadron manoeuvring in the fjord on the afternoon of April 13. *Top:* **This shot shows the *Warspite* entering Rombak fjord, passing the Øyjord point just opposite Narvik. (ECPAD)** *Above:* **Keeping his head down as the shelling was still going on down below, The German took this photo of three British destroyers sailing westwards into Ofotfjord, possibly about to turn left and enter the harbour of Narvik. The jetty which at that time stood at Taraldsvik, just east of Narvik, can be seen at the bottom of the picture. These remarkable pictures have, to our knowledge, never been published before. (ECPAD)**

As *Thiele, Zenker, Bernd von Arnim* and *Lüdemann* fell back into the narrow Rombak fjord east of Narvik, *Künne* set her course northwards into Herjangen fjord. She intentionally ran herself ashore here off Bjerkvik and was almost immediately torpedoed by the pursuing *Eskimo*. Lying at Narvik with cold boilers, *Giese* was finally able to get underway some time after 2 p.m. but her port engine failed when she reached the harbour entrance, leaving her stationary for another quarter of an hour. Nevertheless, she was able to fire three torpedoes although all missed their targets. Together with *von Roeder*, which was barely afloat in the harbour after having been badly damaged in the attack on April 10, they engaged *Eskimo* and *Punjabi* with gunfire. Under the impression that she was a shore battery, *Warspite* engaged *von Roeder* but without success. After the retirement of the other German destroyers, three British destroyers entered the harbour and *Cossack* and *Foxhound* torpedoed *Giese* which was promptly abandoned by her crew. One of the torpedoes missed and hit the jetty instead, blowing out the centre. In the meantime the crippled *von Roeder* was scuttled in the harbour. *Cossack*, which had been hit, went aground on the south side of the entrance, just east of Ankenes. In the meantime four British destroyers had joined the pursuit into Rombak fjord. Their leader *Eskimo* passed through the narrows at Straumen, which are only a few hundred metres across, but *Thiele* was lying in wait beyond. She fired her last torpedo at *Eskimo* and blew off the bow past the No. 1 gun mounting. The other destroyers were held up until *Eskimo* could slowly make her way back, stern first, through the narrows. When the British destroyers finally passed through, they found that *Thiele* had run herself onto the rocks at Sildvik and that *Zenker*, *Bernd von Arnim* and *Lüdemann* had scuttled themselves at the end of the fjord. The crews had escaped ashore, making their way up a track to the railway line above. A boarding party was put aboard *Lüdemann* (see page 14) for although she was aground, she remained upright. She was finally torpedoed before the destroyers fell back to Narvik. The British squadron started down the Ofotfjord about 6.30 p.m. but the *Warspite* later turned back and remained through the night taking wounded on board while one of the destroyers picked up the survivors from the *Hardy* at Ballangen. The squadron finally withdrew into the Vestfjord during the morning of April 14.

For years, the hulls of the three scuttled German destroyers remained to be seen in the remote wilderness at the end of Rombak fjord. This is the wreck of the *Bernd von Arnim*, one of 16 ships in the 1934 class of destroyers. Commissioned in 1937 she was 119 metres long and displaced 2,200 tons with a maximum speed 30 knots. The crew was 325. (Nordland Red Cross War Museum, Narvik)

Commissioned in 1938, *Hans Lüdemann* was one of the six ships in the 1936 class of destroyers. Displacing 2,400 tons, she was 120 metres long and her maximum speed was 38 knots. The three wrecks in Rombak fjord were finally broken up in the mid-1950s and what remains now rest in the mud in shallow water at a depth of 10 to 15 metres. Only the wreck of the *Erich Giese* now remains visible near Sildvik — see front cover. (Nordland Red Cross War Museum, Narvik)

Left: **As previously recounted, one of the torpedoes fired at the *Giese* at Narvik exploded under the harbour jetty. The damage can clearly be seen in this picture taken on April 15 or 16 of a Dornier Do 24 flying boat moored in the harbour. Following the first supply flights by the FW 200 on April 11 and Ju 90 on the 12th (see page 26), the first Dornier from Trondheim landed in Rombak fjord on April 13 and more followed. (Bundesarchiv)**
Right: **The building that once stood in the middle of the jetty was not rebuilt but the one standing further along has survived nearly unchanged.**

Harstad was a small harbour which prevented large ships from entering. Instead they had to anchor in the bay and rely upon a ferry service between ship and shore to unload. The Luftwaffe began raiding the Allied naval base with regularity from April 16 and with even more efficiency as the clear skies which occurred between snow showers permitted accurate bombing. (IWM)

This series of pictures was taken on May 25 when a salvo of bombs targeted the *Mashobra,* a Fleet Air Arm depot ship. She was badly holed below the waterline on her port side and was quickly beached near Gangås, the promontory which lies opposite Harstad, where the crew and the troops onboard could be rescued. (IWM)

which was badly handicapped by lack of fuel and ammunition. The *Erich Giese* and *Erich Koellner* were sunk and the *Hans Lüdemann* hit by a torpedo. Only three British destroyers had been damaged, the most serious being *Eskimo*, which had been struck on its bow by a torpedo launched from the *Georg Thiele*, and *Cossack* hit by fire from *Diether von Roeder*. Also, the Swordfish floatplane catapulted by *Warspite* sighted the *U-64* at anchor in the Herjangen fjord, off Bjerkvik, and promptly attacked her, scoring a direct hit causing the submarine to sink. All out of fuel and ammunition, the remaining German destroyers were finally scuttled by their crews.

Convinced by the news that Narvik would fall in a matter of hours, the jubilant planners in London promptly added to the operations already in the pipeline for Narvik and Trondheim, an ambitious series of naval assaults all along the Norwegian coast:

Operation 'Henry' comprising a detachment of 300 seamen and marines landing at Namsos the very next day.

Operation 'Primrose', a diversionary landing by a force of 600 seamen and marines at Ålesund on April 16.

Operation 'Maurice', the main landing of 5,000 men at Namsos that same day to march on Trondheim.

On the morning of the 14th, it was suggested that to quickly implement Operation 'Maurice', one of the two brigades then sailing to Narvik, the 146th Brigade, should be diverted to Namsos. Ironside protested but Churchill brushed the objection aside and the French, consulted by telephone, agreed to send their 5ème Demi-Brigade de Chasseurs to Trondheim instead of Narvik. The War Cabinet approved the various plans, including the diversion of the 146th Brigade to Namsos, but when the order reached the naval squadron (two large transport ships — the *Chrobry* and the *Empress of Australia* with their escort of three cruisers, *Manchester*, *Birmingham* and *Cairo,* and three destroyers) in the evening, it was only 130 miles from its original target, Narvik. The 'Rupert' force sailing for Narvik was thus left with only the 24th Guards Brigade, but still with an army commander and a navy commander having widely divergent instructions.

The town largely escaped undamaged as there were no military targets comparable to the shipping in the bay so all but a few of the buildings that can be seen in Bishop Marshall's pictures taken in 1940 still stand today. However, Harstad has seen much post-war development and new houses and trees hide many of the original buildings. At least the house on the left painted red and white still remains prominently in full view by the side of Harstadgårdsvegen.

OPERATION 'RUPERT'

HMS *Southampton* disembarked the advance elements of the 1st Scots Guards a few miles west of Sjøvegan at the north-eastern end of the Salangen fjord north of Narvik on the afternoon of the 14th. Three large transports arrived off Harstad on the morning of the 15th and the main force of the 24th Guards Brigade started to go ashore. Harstad was then a small fishing port with three quays designed for coastal traffic, only one of which had cranes. It was a slow process to unload ships, all the more so because the Luftwaffe interrupted the proceedings though not in great strength. The average rate of discharge at the port was two ships in five days, whereas 20 vessels had arrived on the first day.

While waiting for the arrival of equipment and reinforcements, the battalions were dispersed at three points. Half the 1st Scots Guards went to Sjøvegan where the advance elements had landed; the 1st Irish Guards were taken by sea to Bogen on the north side of the Ofotfjord, while the 2nd South Wales Borderers remained at Skånland, midway between Harstad and Narvik. The other half of the 1st Scots Guards were held in reserve at Harstad.

Major-General Mackesy, the army commander, finally met with Admiral Cork on April 15 when the cruiser *Aurora* moored in Andfjord north of Harstad. It was only then that they discovered that they had left England with 'diametrically opposite views as to what was required'. On the 16th, after hours of discussions, the two commanders agreed on the text of a telegram to be sent to London. Having already seen the poor start that had been made at Harstad, Admiral Cork had more or less accepted General Mackesy's point of view that 'until snow melts at the end of April, operations on any scale across country cannot take place.'

The telegram caused consternation when it reached London as the capture of Narvik had been expected within a matter of hours. Churchill reacted quickly, making it clear that in such case, the French Chasseurs Alpins would not be sent to Narvik and the *Warspite* 'will be needed elsewhere in two or three days'.

Having exchanged more telegrams with their superiors, Cork and Mackesy met during the afternoon and finally agreed on a common plan. After a strong naval bombardment from close range, reconnaissance parties would land at Narvik. If German opposition appeared ineffective, two battalions would be put ashore from fishing boats. If however there was strong resistance, bombardment would resume after which a new

While he took pictures of the bombing of Harstad by the Luftwaffe, Marshall met up with Leslie Murray, a cine-cameraman from Universal News, confortably installed behind a large rock filming the same scene. (IWM)

Once again Jean Paul came up trumps and he traced the very same rock in the now wholly built-up area at the top of Harstadgårdsvegen.

Left: **A mixed bag of German prisoners, comprising Gebirgsjägers and Luftwaffe personnel, was pictured waiting on the quayside in the harbour before being taken off by transport ships. They might well be the men captured when a Dornier Do 26 flying boat, the former 'Seefalke' (D-AWDS), was attacked over the Efjord, 40 kilometres south-west of Narvik, by a Skua from HMS *Ark Royal* on May 8. The Dornier made a forced landing and the crew of four and the 18 troops that were on board were captured by a party of marines from HMS *Resolution* and some Polish troops. (The five prototypes of the Dornier Do 26, a four-engined flying boat, had been issued to Küstenfliegergruppe 406 to fulfil reconnaissance and transport tasks for Operation 'Weserübung'.) (IWM)** *Right:* **Another shot in Harstad harbour; this is Rikard Kaarbøs Street.**

The Luftwaffe also struck Harstad's fuel tanks on the shore just north of the town and part of the installation was set ablaze.

This picture of a Norwegian soldier guarding the shattered yard at the northern end of town was taken some days later when the situation had been brought under control. (IWM)

Today the tank farm occupies the same location at the end of Samasjøvegen. Unfortunately it was closed when we were in Harstad, preventing a comparison of the picture on the left.

recce would be made. The operation was to be launched on April 22 and the two commanders went ashore personally to check conditions but they found that the snow was knee-deep. The Admiral, being a small man, 'snowed up to the waist' and had to be helped out 'very angry'.

Bad weather postponed the landing which was finally launched on the 24th, but despite a three-hour bombardment by *Warspite*, the cruisers *Aurora*, *Effingham* and *Enterprise*, and the destroyer *Zulu*, the Germans showed no signs of surrendering. Visibility was practically nil and in the midst of a snowstorm the landing had to be called off. The bombardment had inflicted no vital damage to the Germans but it prompted them to move POWs and non-combat troops along the railway to the east. Dietl transferred his command post back to Sildvik, located at the far end of the Rombak fjord. Also, the 1. Kompanie of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 139 was moved back as divisional reserve to the heights of Bjørnfjell, 25 kilometres east of Narvik, where the ore railway crossed into Sweden.

In spite of these efforts over the last few days, the attention of the War Cabinet had been focused on Trondheim and on the 17th Churchill signalled Admiral Forbes that 'all now centres upon the assault and capture of Trondheim'.

On April 19, the War Office appointed a single commander for the Norwegian theatre (with the exception of Narvik) but, owing to the difficulty of reaching Norway, the new C-in-C of all British forces in central Norway, Lieutenant-General H. R. S. Massy, had to carry out his command from London!

Left: **It was vital to try to provide some defence against the Luftwaffe so a suitable site for the construction of an aerodrome was found at Skånland, midway between Harstad and Narvik, 25 kilometres south of Harstad. Bishop Marshall took this shot of Royal Engineers preparing a D-7 bulldozer. According to the original caption, 'over 750 Norwegians had been at work days and night under RAF supervision and work of levelling, turfing and draining has been accomplished in record time'. Hurricanes of No. 46 Squadron arrived at Skånland on May 26, ferried to Norway by HMS *Glorious*, but the hastily-built airfield proved to be unusable and the aircraft were soon moved to Bardufoss. (IWM)** *Right:* **We found out that the picture had been taken looking due west from the small village of Skånland with Hinnøya island in the background across the Tjeldsundet.**

Having been reinforced by sea and air, the Germans in Oslo went on the offensive on April 12 but two days later operations had to slow down, not only to reorganise but also because fog was hampering the air support. The two battle groups, Gruppe Oslo Nordwest (163. Infanterie-Division with some elements of the 69. and 181. Infanterie-Divisions) and Gruppe Oslo Nord (196. Infanterie-Division) resumed their drive northwards on the 17th. The leaders of Gruppe Nord reached Hamar on the 18th and Elverum on the 20th. Here, a horse-drawn battery of 105mm howitzers — leFH 18s probably from Artillerie-Regiment 233 of the 196. Infanterie-Division — is pictured on the road to the north. (Bundesarchiv)

OPERATION 'SICKLE'

Having received a steady flow of reinforcements by sea and air, the Germans now had most of the 163. and the 196. Infanterie-Divisions available in Oslo. Originally the two divisions were to advance speedily towards Bergen and Trondheim while the southern sector of Norway was to be left for the 181. Infanterie-Division arriving in the third wave. However, due to the late start in Oslo, and the subsequent Norwegian mobilisation, in the early hours of April 11 Generalmajor Engelbrecht decided to change the plan. Instead he ordered that the two divisions had first to secure the flanks — the 163. Infanterie-Division attacking west and south-west and the 196. Infanterie-Division south-east — although both had to be ready to switch their main effort northwards as soon as the flanks were secured.

The two divisions went on the offensive on April 12. The makeshift road-blocks built on General Ruge's order were quickly swept away and the troops advanced rapidly. Infanterie-Regiment 310 took Kongsberg, 80 kilometres south-west of Oslo, without much difficulty on April 13 and captured 2,000 soldiers of the Norwegian 3rd Infantry Regiment and attached units. By the following morning Infanterie-Regiment 236 had reached Hønefoss, 50 kilometres to the north-west of the capital, where the 6th Infantry Regiment had managed to fight a delaying battle. To the south-east, Infanterie-Regiment 362 took Halden and Mysen on the 13th forcing 3,000 Norwegians of the 1st Division mobilising in the area to cross into Sweden to avoid capture.

The German advance was slowed after the 14th to reorganise and because fog hampered Luftwaffe air-support operations. The weather lifted on the 17th and the two battle groups, Gruppe Oslo Nordwest (163. Infanterie-Division with some elements of the 69. and 181. Infanterie-Divisions) and Gruppe Oslo Nord (196. Infanterie-Division) resumed their drive northwards, the main objective being to join with the forces in Trondheim. The advance was made in five columns (from west to east): Infanterie-Regiment 236 through Hønefoss; Infanterie-

Left: **Another shot from the same series. The 'Sigurd Fiane' advert on the house on the left was the clue which enabled Jean Paul to trace the location. Late in 2003, Bjørn Geirr Harsson made contact for us with a doctor, Sigurd Fiane, now 96 years old, who confirmed that he had had his office in Lillestrøm, 20 kilometres east of Oslo, until 1941 when he moved to Honeføss. (Bundesarchiv)** *Right:* **This is Storgata, the main road through Lillestrøm, looking from the junction with Nittedalsgaten.**

Meanwhile, the 163. Infanterie-Division was advancing north-westwards from Oslo. Overcoming troops of the Norwegian 6th Infantry Regiment who were positioned in front of Hønefoss, Infanterie-Regiment 236 (attached from the 181. Infanterie-Division) entered the town on April 14 when Kriegsberichter Otto Lanzinger pictured these Norwegian prisoners being marched to a POW cage. Together with reporter Enno Eimers, Lanzinger had followed the activities of the German forces as they swept through Denmark on April 9; Oslo the following day, and Hønefoss on the 13th. (Bundesarchiv)

Regiment 349 via Nittedal; on both sides of Lake Mjøsa with Infanterie-Regiment 324 in the west and Infanterie-Regiment 345 in the east; and Infanterie-Regiment 340 along the valley of the Glomma river. Also, subsidiary columns were sent out westwards and south-westwards to link up with the forces in Kristiansand and Bergen.

On the left wing of Gruppe Nordwest, Infanterie-Regiment 236 met strong resistance at Klekken throughout the 15th from the 6th Infantry Regiment but the Norwegian resistance collapsed when six light tanks were committed on the following day. The Norwegians generally fell back and by April 18 the leading troops of Gruppe Nordwest had reached Bagn, 120 kilometres north-west of Oslo.

As to Gruppe Nord, Infanterie-Regiment 345 reached Hamar the same day while on the right flank the leaders of Infanterie-Regiment 340 were at Våter. Gjøvik, on the west side of Lake Mjøsa, was occupied on the 19th and Elverum on the 20th.

On the 16th, the Germans had dropped elements of the 1. Kompanie of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 1 under Oberleutnant Herbert Schmidt 150 kilometres behind the front, to cut the Gudbrandsdal valley at Dombås, halfway between Lillehammer and Åndalsnes. Although the paratroopers had difficulty in regrouping because of the snow-covered terrain, nevertheless they succeeded in cutting the lines of communication in the valley for four days. The Norwegians fought back fiercely, shelling and putting pressure on the paratroopers until the last 34 Germans surrendered on April 20.

On the 16th General Ruge decided to move the 4th Brigade (the only sizeable formation in southern Norway that had been able to assemble according to plan) from

'JP' discovered that the picture had been taken on Søndre Torv (the southern market place) in the centre of Hønefoss which lies 50 kilometres to the north-west of Oslo. The 'Petrine Nielsens' sign on the bus in the picture at the top of the page was an advertisement for a store in the capital.

Voss, outside Bergen, to the main theatre of battle along Lake Mjøsa. The transfer started on the night of April 16/17 and the first elements — the 1st Battalion of the 10th Infantry Regiment — had reached the vital Bagn sector by the evening of the 17th.

Operation 'Sickle' began on the night of April 18/19 when the two battalions (the 1st/5th Leicesters and 1st/8th Sherwood Foresters) of the 148th Brigade landed at Åndalsnes. Its commander, Brigadier Harold Morgan, had contradictory orders: to secure Dombås, 100 kilometres to the south-east, and make contact with the Norwegian HQ 'believed to be in area Lillehammer', but also to 'demonstrate' towards Trondheim, over

At Klekken, between Hønefoss and Jevnaker, elements of the 6th Infantry Regiment held out resolutely throughout April 15 against the leading elements of Kampfgruppe Adlhoch — which comprised two battalions from Infanterie-Regiment 236, two mountain companies and six panzers — as it pushed eastwards from Hønefoss to reach Randsfjord. This is another picture which was published in 1942 in the German book *Entscheidende Stunden* but with no precise location. Nevertheless Ole Bjarne Strømmen was able to show us where it was taken near Klekken Hotel.

300 kilometres to the north! Morgan met Ruge at Øyer, just north of Lillehammer, in the early hours of the 20th. The Norwegian commander firmly stated that he expected all troops fighting in his country to conform to his own strategy and he asked Morgan to back up the Norwegian 2nd Division with his forces on the decisive front below Lillehammer. As far as Trondheim was concerned, it could wait for a future assault from the sea.

Ignoring the orders he had been given by the War Office, Morgan complied and during the night his two battalions were moved by train to Lillehammer. However when they reached their destination the Norwegians were disappointed to see that they were not regular troops and that they were armed only with rifles and light machine guns, with no anti-aircraft guns, no artillery and possessed no vehicles. To raise the morale of his own soldiers, General Ruge chose to place the British reinforcements on both sides of Lake Mjøsa.

Infanterie-Regiment 345 launched an attack on the eastern side of the lake on April 21, backed up by some tanks and the support of the Luftwaffe. The British and Norwegians suffered heavy losses and after a difficult retreat in the snow, they regrouped the next day at Balbergkamp just north of Lillehammer. German ski troops succeeded in moving round behind them on the 22nd and the force was compelled to withdraw in disorder, over 100 men being captured together with a large number of machine guns.

On April 23 junction was made with the elements retreating from the western side of the lake. The two battered battalions with three squadrons of the Norwegian 2nd Dragoons, tried to defend Tretten, a strategic position 25 kilometres north of Lillehammer which commanded the access to the Gudbrandsdal valley across the mountains. A few light panzers, against which the anti-tank rifles proved ineffective, broke through and Infanterie-Regiment 345 quickly captured or put to flight the defenders of Tretten. By evening, the badly-mauled survivors of the 148th Brigade, about 300 men in all, were evacuated by bus to Kvam.

Klekken, looking north in the direction of Jevnaker. Playing his part in the propaganda war, Eric Borchert, the author of *Entscheidende Stunden,* did not hesitate in stating that British soldiers had set these farms alight before withdrawing. However there was not a single British soldier in the area at the time, and the blaze had been caused by the Germans trying to dislodge the Norwegian defenders.

Left: **On the 16th, Major Haneborg-Hansen, commanding the battalion of 6th Infantry Regiment, decided to withdraw his forces all the way to Bagn, 110 kilometres north-west of Hønefoss. The Germans followed slowly, clearing road-blocks and repairing bridges on the way, and at about 4 p.m. on April 18 they came into contact with the Norwegian rearguards in the Leite defile, just south of Bagn. (Bundesarchiv)** *Right:* **The E16 in the Begna river valley looking northwards at Leite . . . then and now.**

Following the cancellation of 'Hammer' — the direct naval attack on Trondheim that he would have commanded — Major-General Bernard Paget was appointed C-in-C Operation 'Sickle' on April 21. Committing the 15th Brigade, he was to link-up with the 148th Brigade between Åndalsnes and Lillehammer and proceed towards Trondheim. However, having observed the landing of the 15th Brigade at Åndalsnes on April 23, the Luftwaffe began bombing the harbour in earnest from the 25th with devastating regularity, and by the following evening the port area was flattened, the wooden jetty destroyed, as well as much of the equipment and ammunition that had been unloaded. Nevertheless, the 15th Brigade managed to link up with the 148th Brigade and dig in around Kvam, blocking the road through the Gudbrandsdal valley.

The Gladiators of No. 263 Squadron, RAF, had been ferried to Norway on HMS *Glorious* and on April 24 the 18 aircraft took off and landed on the ice-covered Lake Lesjaskog, 65 kilometres east of Åndalsnes. Although the drop in temperature during the night made it very difficult to start the engines next morning, nevertheless the Gladiators were soon patrolling over the British positions. The Luftwaffe quickly turned their attention to them and launched repeated attacks throughout the day. By evening the Gladiators claimed six German bombers shot down but all but five had been destroyed on the ground by bombing and strafing. The five survivors were transferred to a new base at Setnesmoen near Åndalsnes leaving the wrecks of 13 Gladiators and three Norwegian Fokker CVs on the frozen lake (see *After the Battle* No. 28).

During the day Kampfgruppe Pellengahr (Generalmajor Richard Pellengahr, commander of the 196. Infanterie-Division) had attacked the Kvam position forcing the British to withdraw on the evening of the 26th to form a new defensive line at Otta, 50 kilometres south-east of Dombås. When the Germans resumed their attacks on the 27th, the British had to fall back yet again on the night of April 27/28.

In the meantime, on the 196. Infanterie-Division's right wing, Kampfgruppe Fischer (named after Oberst Hermann Fischer, commander of Infanterie-Regiment 340) had advanced along the Österdal valley and reached Tynset on the 25th. Pressing on north-westwards, the leading elements were at Ulsberg on the 29th. From there, one battle group turned north and made contact that same day near Støren with elements of the 181. Infanterie-Division which had advanced south from Trondheim. The German forces from Oslo had linked up with the Trondheim force.

The Norwegians soon pulled back enabling the German advance to be resumed and around 6 p.m. Otto Lanzinger pictured another group of infantry advancing in company with a PzKpfw II. The Norwegians stood firm at Bagn, holding up the advance of Kampfgruppe Daubert for a week in what was probably the largest pitched battle between Norwegian and German forces of the campaign. (Bundesarchiv)

We are still on the E16 but at Bergsund, two kilometres south of Bagn, this time looking southwards. Amazingly, the same house is still standing and the corner of the roof matches the original perfectly.

OPERATION 'MAURICE'

According to the series of plans approved on the 14th, the Allied naval attack against Trondheim was to be preceded by the landing of a strong force at Namsos — code-named Operation 'Maurice'. The 350 marines of Operation 'Henry' had already established an initial bridgehead just east of Namsos on the 14th and the 146th Brigade went ashore at Namsos between April 15 and 17. The conditions for unloading the ships were poor with only one stone wharf, no cranes, and large ships unable to even enter the harbour, and the operation was interrupted by frequent attacks by the Luftwaffe.

On the 17th the Norwegians put Colonel Ole Berg Getz, the CO of the 13th Infantry Regiment, in command of all their troops in the area which had a strength of about two battalions. Thanks to Getz's efficiency, the British troops were disembarked without delay, and he also provided trucks to move them southwards to Steinkjer.

On April 18, Major-General Adrian Carton de Wiart, the commander of Operation 'Maurice', was informed that the major naval assault against Trondheim, now renamed Operation 'Hammer', was about to be launched. By then, his force was spread right along the road from Steinkjer to Røra and Verdal, half way to Trondheim. However, in committing his forces in the south to attack Trondheim quickly in conjunction with 'Hammer', he failed to take into account the warning passed on by Colonel Getz that the ice in the fjord was beginning to melt. Thus the road south of Steinkjer which bordered the fjord would soon to become vulnerable to a naval attack. (Getz in fact withdrew his own forces to Steinkjer.)

The four transports in the French convoy FP1 diverted from Narvik moored at Namsos at 10 p.m. on the 19th and the three battalions (the 13ème, 53ème and 67ème BCA) of the 5ème Demi-Brigade de Chasseurs Alpins started to disembark. Major-General Carton de Wiart had ordered that all the ships must clear the harbour by daylight so the unloading was carried out at a frantic pace, but when the order to leave was given at 2.30 a.m., two of the ships had to depart with stores still on board. Not surprisingly, the Chasseurs Alpins were soon to find out that half of their equipment was missing.

Following the appearance of a reconnaissance aircraft early next morning, the first German bombers appeared at 9.30 a.m., concentrating their attack on the harbour area. There were no anti-aircraft defences in place, save for some machine guns manned by the Chasseurs Alpins, so the Germans were able to launch their attack from less than 3,000 feet. They returned in force from midday and bombed the town during the afternoon and by the time the last of the bombers departed in the evening, Namsos was aflame.

Following the news of the damage suffered by the cruiser *Suffolk* in the attack by Ju 88s of KG 30 off Stavanger on the 17th, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, the First Sea Lord, had second thoughts and Operation 'Hammer' was cancelled on April 19. However neither the Norwegians nor the French were informed and even Major-General Carton de Wiart at Namsos and Brigadier Morgan at Åndalsnes were kept in the dark.

On April 20 a new strategy was approved, that of a pincer attack against Trondheim, with plans to send the whole of the 1ère Division de Chasseurs to Major-General Carton de Wiart at Namsos for the attack from the north ('Maurice') and the 15th Brigade to Major-General Paget at Åndalsnes to reinforce the southern prong ('Sickle'). Actually, both forces were by then in difficulties and quite unable to mount any attack towards Trondheim. Only vague and fragmentary information was being received from Norway; consequently no decisions of importance were taken for the next three days.

Confusion plagued the beginning of Operation 'Maurice' — the landing at Namsos (see map page 5) — but at least Colonel Ole Berg Getz, the Norwegian officer commanding the Namsos area, showed he was a man equal to the task. We see him here with a Norwegian soldier and French soldiers and sailors. (ECPAD)

The first French transports moored at Namsos late on April 19 when the three battalions of the 5ème Demi-Brigade de Chasseurs started to come ashore, but the landing triggered a major raid by the Luftwaffe on the town the next day. (ECPAD)

The harbour has been much modernised since 1940 when the British and French forces found very poor facilities for unloading their ships. Nevertheless, this is the same quay where the French sailor had run to take shelter from the Luftwaffe.

The Allied Supreme War Council met in Paris on the afternoon of April 22. Reynaud reiterated that there was only one objective, the Swedish iron ore mines, to which Chamberlain expressed complete agreement. The whole meeting turned out as 'a fine exercise in non-commitment' and the British still did not inform the French that Operation 'Hammer' had been cancelled. Together with Narvik, Trondheim was even re-affirmed as the objective! The meeting left most of the participants in high spirit but some were not so easily convinced. Among them was Daladier, the Minister for National Defence and War, who just wrote 'Farcical' on his own copy of the minutes, and Churchill who returned to London much concerned at the failure 'of our method of conducting the war'.

After elements of the 181. Infanterie-Division had been brought in to reinforce Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 138, from April 21 the Germans gained the initiative at Trondheim sending one battle group southwards and another to the north. In the morning, as the I. Bataillon of Infanterie-Regiment 359 was in contact with the 146th Brigade at Verdal, the Germans sent a destroyer and a torpedo boat deep into the fjords to land troops at Verdal and Kjerknesvågen in the rear and flank of the British battalions. By April 23 they had expelled the 146th Brigade from all its positions along Trondheim fjord and it was only due to the assistance of Norwegian and French detachments that the exposed elements finally succeeded in extricating themselves.

The 'Maurice' force then regrouped near Hjelle, north-west of Steinkjer, and took up defensive positions in concert with the Norwegians. That day, Carton de Wiart reported to the War Office that he saw 'very little point in remaining in that part of Norway sitting out like rabbits in the snow'.

Though the War Office had made the decision to cancel 'Hammer' one week earlier, the French and Norwegians had still not been informed, so Général Audet and Colonel Getz met at Namsos on April 26 to lay plans for an attack on Steinkjer. The British were to attack from the west, the French from the north, and the Norwegians from the east along Lake Snåsa, the operation to be launched simultaneously with the naval assault at Trondheim. Major-General Carton de Wiart made no comment on the plan of attack. That same day, when the War Office offered him a half-brigade of Chasseurs Alpins, he declined, commenting that these reinforcements 'would complicate matters' in case of an evacuation.

Their first bomb hit the Van Severen sawmill about 10 a.m. and set it on fire, this picture being taken some time later when the town's fire brigade were trying to control the blaze. (ECPAD)

More bombs started other fires and soon Namsos was burning. The houses visible in the top picture finally burnt down on April 20 but all were rebuilt on the same spot after the war. Haakon Borkmo is still selling clothing at this same corner of Namsegata and Abel Meyers Street.

Left: **Within a few hours a large part of the wooden houses had been burnt to the ground. In the harbour most of the supplies and ammunition already unloaded by the French had also gone up in smoke. Here a French Quartier Maitre (Leading-Seaman) is pictured in the town which had been reduced to ashes. (ECPAD)** *Right:* **This approximate comparison was taken from the harbour looking northward across the large open area around the new church.**

Left: **After a forced march across the mountains to avoid being cut off by the Germans near Steinkjer, men of the 4th Royal Lincoln were billeted at Skage, 15 kilometres east of Namsos.**

Captain Keating featured these men on road control chatting with young Norwegians. (IWM) *Right:* **Looking south at the crossroads at Hunn, with Marie-Françoise directing traffic!**

The original caption to this picture of two men of the 4th Royal Lincolns cleaning a Bren says that 'they had thrown away their steel helmets during the march to avoid being recognised by the Germans'. (IWM)

The same mountain appearing in the background led JP to this incredible discovery at Hunn: the old bench of 1940 still there over 60 years later! The Norwegian campaign has been a strong interest of his for many years and we finally let Jean Paul loose on Norway in April 2004.

On April 24 London finally realised what had happened at Tretten and Steinkjer. Pessimism was the order of the day and by the morning of the 26th the conclusion was reached that the forces from Åndalsnes and Namsos should be evacuated. However when the mere possibility of pulling out was mentioned to the French it caused an uproar, and the French War Committee promptly sent the chief of the French General Staff, Général Maurice Gamelin, to London to obtain British assent to his plan which was to maintain a large bridgehead south of Trondheim in the Kristiansund—Åndalsnes—Ålesund area. Gamelin conferred with the British War Cabinet, including Chamberlain and Churchill, but all remained unconvinced by his arguments. It was then decided to call an emergency meeting of the Allied Supreme War Council.

On the morning of the 27th, Lieutenant-General Massy, C-in-C of all British forces engaged in Norway elsewhere than at Narvik, sent an urgent message to the War Cabinet stating that the 'Sickle' force at Åndalsnes and 'Maurice' force at Namsos ought to be re-embarked without delay. General Ironside had the memorandum in his hands before the morning meeting of the War Cabinet, and he made a strong recommendation in support of it yet Churchill advocated leaving the troops in Norway. After the meeting finished, General Massy cabled Major-General Carton de Wiart: 'Evacuation decided in principle. Plan in your case gradual but rapid'.

The Supreme War Council met in London later that afternoon. It was a sad comedy. The decision to evacuate central Norway had just been taken but Chamberlain disguised the fact saying that there was only question of an evacuation 'sooner or later'. Quickly changing the subject, he turned to Narvik where an attack would soon be launched. As to Général Gamelin's suggestions, he said they were presently being studied when they had already been clearly rejected!

Reynaud insisted that an Allied retreat from central Norway 'would be a moral and political disaster' and Chamberlain said he agreed with the French proposal to maintain forces around Trondheim (Gamelin's plan). Reynaud expressed his pleasure that 'an agreement had been reached on Général Gamelin's proposals' and the French retired, satisfied that they had won the British round but, even as they left, orders were sent to Namsos and Åndalsnes for immediate evacuation. It was only on the afternoon of the 29th — two days later — that the French learnt of it!

At Åndalsnes, at dawn on the 28th, Major-General Paget received instructions to evacuate 'as soon as possible'. Though he was ordered to withhold the information from the Norwegians, he went straight to General Ruge. Ruge was totally surprised as he had

still not even been informed of the one-week-old decision to cancel the attack on Trondheim. Although he spoke openly of the betrayal of his country, nevertheless he agreed to help the British to carry out their orders.

As the forward elements of Paget's force were at Dombås, 150 kilometres from Åndalsnes, it took two days to disengage them and pull them all back to base — by foot, trucks and train. Supported by Norwegian ski troops and four artillery guns sent up by the Norwegians, elements of the 15th Brigade held Dombås until the evening of April 30, the Germans finally taking the key town on May 1 reporting to have captured 250 cars and trucks in the area.

Four cruisers took off 1,800 men at Åndalsnes during the night of April 30/May 1 and the last forces of Operation 'Sickle' — about 2,300 men — embarked in three cruisers and the sloop HMS *Auckland* on the following night. The leaders of Kampfgruppe Pellengahr entered Åndalsnes next morning and later reported to have captured 2,500 Norwegian soldiers in and near the town.

At Namsos, Major-General Carton de Wiart had received the order to evacuate on the evening of the 27th. He met Général Audet next morning and told him but followed War Office instructions not to inform the Norwegians. Consequently, while the British and French forces started to pull back on his right wing, Colonel Getz continued his advance towards Steinkjer in accordance with the plans agreed on April 26.

During the evening of May 2, Audet and Carton de Wiart finally sent messages to Colonel Getz to tell him that they were leaving, and to beg his forgiveness. Thus, just as he was expecting a strong Allied naval assault on Trondheim, Colonel Getz found himself abandoned in the north-east of Steinkjer with German forces deep on his right flank.

From April 30, the Luftwaffe attacks on Namsos harbour and town intensified dramatically and the anti-aircraft sloop HMS *Bittern* was hit and subsequently scuttled. AA defences were almost nil and the few fighters sent on May 1 from the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal* were of little effect.

A fleet of French and British ships — four large French transports escorted by three British and one French cruisers and eight British and one French destroyers — arrived at Namsos during the evening of May 2. While some of the warships patrolled the entrance to the fjord, the transports moored in the harbour and 4,200 men — 2,350 British and 1,850 French — were successfully taken off in less than four hours.

The vacillations of the Allied strategy in the country were quickly felt at Namsos, and as early as April 22 the commander of Operation 'Maurice', Major-General Adrian Carton de Wiart, reported to the War Office that he saw 'very little point in remaining in that part of Norway sitting out like rabbits in the snow'. He finally received orders to evacuate on the evening of the 27th but, following War Office instructions, he was not permitted to inform the Norwegians. Consequently, while the British and French forces started to pull back, Colonel Getz on their left continued his advance towards Steinkjer in accordance with the plans agreed the day before. On April 30, as the forces were moving back to Namsos ready to embark, Captain Keating took this photo of Major-General Carton de Wiart and his ADC at their HQ near Namsos. (IWM)

Early afternoon on May 3 the last 30 men boarded the British destroyer *Afridi* and the flotilla managed to steam out of the fjord before the Luftwaffe caught them. Two destroyers — the French *Bison* and the *Afridi* — were subsequently sunk by Ju 87 Stukas of StG 1 in the open sea but the evacuation of Namsos was largely carried out successfully.

On May 3, General Jacob Hvinden-Haug, the commander of the 2nd Division, signed the capitulation of all Norwegian forces south of Trondheim. The battle in central Norway was over. Some 2,000 men of the Norwegian 5th Brigade and attached units had surrendered to the Germans in the Steinkjer sector and 3,500 more from the 4th Brigade farther south around Fagernes.

As for King Håkon and his government, they had made for the harbour at Molde, now ablaze from repeated Luftwaffe attacks, where they were embarked in the cruiser *Glasgow* on the evening of the 29th. The gold and silver reserves of the Bank of Norway were also evacuated as was the stock of heavy water produced at Rjukan. (It had been bought by the French Government on Professor Frédéric Joliot-Curie's suggestion with the aim of constructing, according to his patent of 1939, a 'powerful bomb'.)

Leaving Norway was still out of question for the official Norwegian party but they hesitated as to where to go next. The members of the government were in favour of going to Mosjøen while the King preferred Tromsø. It was finally decided to move on to Tromsø, a convenient decision for Captain F. H. Pegram of the *Glasgow* already had orders to take them there! General Ruge left Molde and joined the group there on May 1.

Left: **'A Royal Marine howitzer in position near Namsos' was the censored caption to this picture and, but for the bridge in the background, it seemed that tracing the location would be an impossible challenge. Nevertheless JP found it just east of Namsos. The main road leading to the Namsen bridge (off to the right) and then southwards to Steinkjer crosses the railway on an embankment. The picture was taken at Hylla Farm and the gun is pointing south-westward in the direction of the entrance to the fjord. (IWM)** *Right:* **The spot now appears to be abandoned and bushes hide the view of the road and bridge but the howitzer once stood here! Those still in doubt must look at the corner of the house on the right: it is still the same.**

On May 9, after many exchanges of signals with London, Major-General Mackesy finally agreed to carry out a landing at Bjerkvik at the bottom of Herjangen fjord, just north of Narvik. The assault force — the battleship *Resolution*, the cruiser *Effingham*, eight destroyers and five landing craft — sailed up the fjord in the early hours of May 13. *Left:* **The squadron shelled Bjerkvik and its surroundings for an hour. (ECPAD)** *Right:* **A new harbour has now been built on the western side of the fjord from where we took the comparison, looking towards the north.**

NARVIK, THE ONLY ALLIED SUCCESS

By mid-April Generalleutnant Dietl and his 2,000 Gebirgsjägers at Narvik were in a difficult situation. Bottled in by the Royal Navy which was present in considerable strength, they had no chance of being reinforced by sea. At the same time, they had to defend an extensive perimeter on remote and unfamiliar ground in very difficult climatic conditions. However the position was not desperate as the rough terrain provided good defensive positions and the mountain troops were well trained and equipped. There were also large stocks of food available.

Some reinforcement was possible by using the 2,600 German sailors from the destroyers sunk or scuttled in the fjord as there was no difficulty in arming them from the large number of weapons — 8,000 rifles, 300 light machine guns and 800,000 rounds — which had been seized from the Norwegian army depot at Elvegårdsmoen. Uniforms were also available for those who had had their uniform soaked with oil when their ship had been sunk. The sailors were organised into Marine-Kompanies but, with some exceptions, their combat effectiveness as mountain troops was limited and Dietl mainly used them as labour for moving supplies across his perimeter and to guard the remoter parts of the railway.

Due to the distance from the nearest airfield at Trondheim, some 900 kilometres away, the Luftwaffe could not provide very much air support. At first only Focke-Wulf Fw 200s and Junkers Ju 90s could reach Narvik to drop ammunition and one flight took place on April 11 and a second the following day. On the 13th, a Dornier Do 24 seaplane flying from the Trondheim area alighted in Rombak fjord to bring supplies. Then on the 14th, 11 Ju 52s from Kampfgruppe z.b.V. 102 managed to land on the ice of Lake Hartvig, 25 kilometres north-east of Narvik, bringing in light artillery and ammunition, but the aircraft had only enough fuel for a one-way trip and all had to be abandoned save one that was refuelled by siphoning fuel from the others. They eventually sank when the ice thawed.

The attack by HMS *Warspite* at Narvik on the 13th, and the destruction of the German destroyer flotilla there, had raised serious doubts in Hitler's mind as to the viability of continuing operations in Norway. As the major attack in the West — Operation 'Gelb' — was due to be launched in May, he needed the Norwegian campaign finalised as quickly as possible. In his diary, Jodl noted the 'Führungschaos' — the chaos in the command — that lasted for several days after April 14, and he noted how the 'Führer

The 1er Bataillon of the Légion landed and took Bjerkvik after two hours of fighting. In the afternoon, the 2ème Bataillon landed some distance to the east and took Medby in the face of strong resistance. (ECPAD)

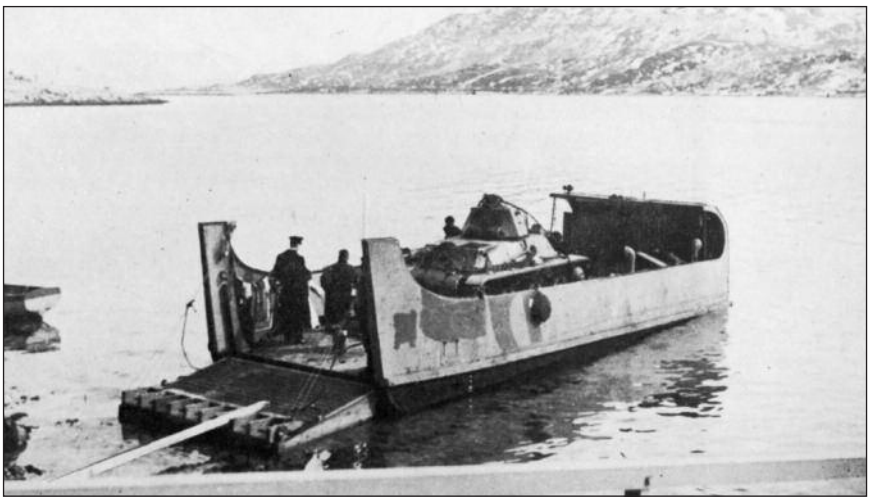
Jean Paul found that the photograph had been taken at the eastern end of Bjerkvik, just as the Légion was advancing eastward in the direction of Medby.

These shots lifted from a French cine film graphically illustrate the damage inflicted by the naval shelling upon the frail wooden constructions which compose the majority of the buildings in the fishing villages. *Above:* **The destroyer *Fame* with Medby in the background. (ECPAD)** *Bottom:* **Comparison taken from the new harbour just west of Bjerkvik.**

wants Dietl to make his way south. I came out against such an unthinkable project'. The tension escalated on the night of April 16/17 and by the following afternoon Hitler had signed an order prepared by Keitel which instructed Dietl to evacuate Narvik with his troops and cross the border into Sweden where they were to be interned.

'You don't give up the game before it's actually lost', noted Jodl, and the OKW managed to hold up the order for a time. That evening, after new reports that seemed to indicate a weakening of the Allied position, Hitler relented and the order was cancelled. Much to his relief, Jodl issued a new order that instructed Dietl to hang on as long as possible. Nevertheless, two officers were detailed to travel to Narvik with specific orders from the OKW to destroy the harbour installations. Hauptmann Sternburger and Hauptmann Oberndorfer, the latter an explosives expert, arrived by seaplane on April 22 and on the 24th the ore pier was blown up.

However, following the landing of British and French troops at Namsos, Hitler got cold feet again and Jodl noted on the 22nd how



Five Hotchkiss H-39s were put ashore on May 13 to support the assault of the Légionnaires. Initially three of the 1ère Section were landed at Bjerkvik followed by two of the 2ème Section some time later near Medby.

'the Führer is increasingly anxious over the British landings'. Next day he wrote that 'tension has risen yet another notch as northward progression of the 163. and 196. Infanterie-Divisions is very slow'. But when on the 24th reports came in of the British rout north of Lillehammer, Jodl noted on the 25th that 'the mood is now definitely optimistic'.

Meanwhile Generalleutnant Dietl had organised his perimeter in three sectors. Major Arthur Haussels was responsible for the Narvik sector with the II. Bataillon of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 139 and six Marine-Kompanies. South of the Rombak fjord the railway line sector was held by Marine-Regiment Berger under Fregattenkapitän Fritz Berger (ex-commander of the 1. Zerstörer-Flotille) with a total of 12 Marine-Kompanies, and the I. and III. Bataillons of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 139 under Oberst Alois Windisch held the stretch from Bjerkvik to the border with Sweden.

To clear the railway as far as the Swedish border, an improvised armoured train was put together on April 14. A flat-car loaded with stones and sand headed the train in order to explode any mines that might have been laid on the tracks, followed by another flat-car with machine guns set up behind sandbags. The engine came next with two wagons, each loaded with 20 men, bringing up the rear.

Early on the 16th the 1. Kompanie of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 139 attacked eastwards towards Bjørnfjell, the spot where the railway crossed into Sweden. The Norwegian battalion which had escaped from Narvik on the 9th was overwhelmed and the Germans reported they had taken 74 prisoners but that 150-300 Norwegian soldiers had crossed into Sweden to avoid capture.

On the northern flank of the perimeter two battalions of the Norwegian 16th Infantry Regiment attacked on the 24th in a heavy snowstorm, outflanked the German outposts and recaptured the valley at the end of the Gratangen fjord. The Germans counter-attacked early next morning taking the Norwegians by surprise, killing over 100 (including three company commanders) and taking over 150 prisoners. However Dietl had to abandon the sector of Gratangen within a day or two to redeploy his forces.

He started to receive some supplies when a train arrived at Bjørnfjell on the 23rd having crossed Sweden with four wagons loaded with clothing, skis, and medical equipment. There was also food aboard although no ammunition but the 30 men on the train in civilian clothes were actually signal personnel. On April 25 another train brought in 300 medical personnel. Also, 500 sailors from the sunken destroyers made their way back to Germany by train via Sweden, being successfully presented as 'shipwrecked sailors' to avoid internment.

Things slowly improved as the Luftwaffe progressively established a base at Vaernes near Trondheim and thereafter in good weather Dietl received several attack sorties daily in support of his troops and air drops of essential supplies. Dornier Do 24 and Do 26 seaplanes were also employed bringing in 15 men at a time; for example, on May 10 one alighted in Rombak fjord and another in Beisfjord, bringing in men from 3. Kompanie of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 138. More flights followed and on the 20th a Do 26 brought in a 37mm anti-tank gun.

On May 14 the first sizeable reinforcement of parachute troops from Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 1 was dropped near Bjørnfjell. Also two companies of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 137 who had been sent on a hasty training course at the parachute school at Stendal were dropped on May 23. Only two men were lightly wounded from the 66 landing from the 1. Kompanie and no casualties were suffered on the 24th when 55 men from the 2. Kompanie followed. Finally, three companies

The assault on Narvik was finally launched on May 28 when the 1er Bataillon of the Légion landed on the Orneset beach in the early hours. This picture of the bombardment of Narvik was taken from the range predictor post above the bridge of the cruiser HMS *Cairo*. (ECPAD)

Gun crews of *Cairo* pause for a moment during the bombardment. Later that same day the cruiser would be struck by a bomb during the attack by the Luftwaffe, suffering damage to the bridge and chart-house. (IWM)

Général Antoine Béthouart was in command of the forces that landed at Narvik. We see him here (front left by the helmsman) in a barge alongside HMS *Effingham* during the earlier assault on Bjerkvik. (ECPAD)

Left: **The 2nd Battalion of the Norwegian 15th Infantry Regiment followed on at Orneset while the 2ème Bataillon of the Légion landed at Taraldsvik. Two Hotchkiss tanks were landed there in support but both quickly bogged down on the beach. One tank was recovered on the 29th but the second was blown up and abandoned when the Allies evacuated Narvik in early June. (ECPA)** *Right:* **Taraldsvik, between Orneset and Narvik, then and now. The jetty that was there in 1940 has been demolished and no trace of it remains.**

from Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 1 were hastily transferred to Norway from the Netherlands after their capture of that country in Operation 'Gelb' and they were progressively dropped over Bjørnfjell. All in all, throughout the remainder of May and the first week of June, 1,050 men were parachuted in to reinforce Dietl.

At the beginning of May, the failure in central Norway was threatening both the Chamberlain and Reynaud governments and each knew that something positive had to be done to save the day. The capture of Narvik would provide at last one success.

On the evening of April 27, the second echelon of the French force, the 27ème Demi-Brigade de Chasseurs, had started coming ashore at Sjøvegan (the brigade staff and the 6ème BCA); in the west at Skånland (14ème BCA and part of the 12ème BCA), and at Bogen (elements of the 12ème BCA). Meanwhile, the 2nd South Wales Borderers were brought across to Ballangen, on the south side of the Ofotfjord, south-west of Narvik, and on the 29th, reinforced by a ski troop from the Chasseurs Alpins, they started eastwards in the direction of Ankenes.

Général Antoine Béthouart arrived at Harstad on the morning of April 28 and his arrival helped put an end to the paralysis affecting the British command there. In company with Admiral Cork, he embarked on the destroyer HMS *Codrington* the following day to reconnoitre the direct sea approaches to Narvik from the Herjangen fjord and Rombak fjord. That evening, he proposed a landing at Øyjord, just opposite Narvik, but Mackesy refused to contemplate a naval assault and instead ordered the French to attack inland from the north to take Bjerkvik and thus gain a base for a further attack on Narvik. Béthouart met General Carl Gustav Fleischer, the Norwegian district commander (6th Division), at Sjøvegan to co-ordinate the assault. Two companies from the 6ème BCA were taken round by water to the Gratangen fjord and landed at Foldvick on April 30, thus shortening the land approach to Bjerkvik by more than 50 kilometres.

With the Norwegians on their left, the French advanced up the Lagbergdal valley and contact with the German positions was made on May 1. From then on further progress southwards met with stubborn resistance but by May 8 the Chasseurs Alpins had managed to push the Germans back to Vasose, midway to Bjerkvik.

Far to the south, following the capture of Namsos, the Germans quickly assembled a battle group of mountain troops under Generalleutnant Valentin Feurstein, the commander of the 2. Gebirgs-Division. Not deterred by roads that British and French had found impassable, the Kampfgruppe started out on May 6 in a daring overland offensive to the north. Their pace was not even slackened by the road-blocks set up along the route by detachments of the Norwegian 14th Infantry Regiment and on May 10 the leading elements were approaching Mosjøen. Now the Germans launched another combined enterprise, Operation 'Wildente', to strike at the rear of the defenders by shipping one company of infantry in a freighter (the *Nordnorge)* from Trondheim and landing them at Hemnesberget in Ranfjord, 70 kilometres north of Mosjøen, while seaplanes brought in another company. The British and the Norwegians beat a hasty retreat towards the north and the Germans entered Mosjøen early on the 11th. The Luftwaffe thus obtained staging and refuelling bases that permitted it to fly air support missions to Dietl's troops.

On May 26 the anti-aircraft cruiser HMS *Curlew* was bombed by He 111s from KG 100 and sunk off Skånland. Two days later her sister ship, HMS *Cairo,* was damaged in another Luftwaffe attack.

While the Norwegians entered the eastern suburb of Narvik, the Légionnaires circled round to the harbour area. Narvik was occupied by the evening and that night contact was made with the Poles advancing along the Beisfjord. (ECPAD)

The session of the British Parliament of May 7 was a difficult one for Chamberlain. He tried to minimise the setbacks suffered in Norway, while he was frequently interrupted with shouts of 'Hitler missed the bus!', a repetition of his unfortunate words of April 4. The Labour and Liberal opposition highlighted the lack of training of the troops, the absence of anti-aircraft guns, the lack of air cover, the absence of snowshoes, the scandal of the loading and unloading of ships. Admiral Sir Roger Keyes intervened and stressed that the capture of Trondheim was essential: 'Ever since April 15th I have been urging the Admiralty to take more vigorous naval action . . . a shocking story of ineptitude'.

Most of the speakers, among them Keyes and Lloyd George, tried hard to shield Churchill sitting on the government bench as he was the only man they saw being capable of taking over in such a time of peril. In Harold McMillan words, 'the chief anxiety of the second [day] was the rescue of Churchill'.

The vote that followed on May 8 was a defeat for Chamberlain: 281 had voted for the Government, 200 against, of whom 31 were Tories, while 60 more had abstained. Chamberlain realised that he had to resign but held back until the afternoon of the 9th when he met Churchill and Halifax at Downing Street. He explained that the Labour leaders' response to his treaties left no hope of him forming a National Government. The question now was, whom should he advise the King to replace him? Chamberlain said he preferred Halifax. To this Churchill remained silent but Halifax finally said that being a Peer and out of the House of Commons, he was not in the best position to be Prime Minister in time of war.

Next morning, May 10, the Germans attacked in the West. Chamberlain changed his mind once again and decided to remain at his post but finally relented, and in the evening Churchill was invited to Buckingham Palace where the King asked him to form a new Government.

The third wave of French troops (including a Polish brigade with four battalions organised within the French Army in February 1940 under the Polish government in exile) had come ashore between May 7 and May 9. The 13ème Demi-Brigade de Légion Etrangère (two battalions) at Harstad and Ballangen; two battalions of the Polish Brigade and the 342ème Compagnie de Chars (a tank company) at Harstad; and the last two battalions of the Polish Brigade split between Salangen and Ballangen.

Major-General Mackesy would still not hear of a naval assault but when Admiral Cork pressed for an immediate landing at Narvik, Mackesy turned to Béthouart's plan

The third Hotchkiss tank of the 2ème Section was landed on April 29, together with one of those bogged down at Taraldsvik which had been recovered, and both then advanced to support the Légion advancing towards Beisfjord. (Nordland Red Cross War Museum, Narvik)

With Narvik in Allied hands, the Luftwaffe soon arrived from Trondheim to bomb the town. Following the first raid on May 31, a force of 23 He 111s of KG 26 bombed the centre of the city on June 2. This part of Narvik was very badly damaged and had to be completely rebuilt after the war but Ulf Eirik Torgersen, the director of the Nordland Red Cross War Museum, knew the picture of the Hotchkiss and he showed us where it had been taken on Kirkegata, looking west.

Left: **At the railway station at the eastern end of the town, Bishop Marshall, the War Office photographer, took this picture of railway personnel clearing the platforms. The station itself appears not to have suffered much from the naval bombardment although the power station (in the background, behind the truckloads of iron ore) has lost its roof. (IWM)** *Right:* **The station has been rebuilt in a modern style so the power station with its new roof is the only building that has survived unchanged.**

The railway line from Narvik up to the frontier with Sweden was vital to the German troops in Narvik, all the more so because from April 23 they started to receive supplies from trains arriving through Sweden with food, clothing and medical supplies. After the evacuation of Narvik, the station at Katterat *(above)*, 20 kilometres to the east, became one of the keys in the German defensive perimeter. (Bundesarchiv)

Jean Paul explains that 'the only way to reach Katterat is still via the railway and, so that I didn't have to wait hours in the cold for the return train in the evening, I asked the train master if he would tell the driver to halt the train to let me take a photo! I was amazed when he agreed, and he let me have ten minutes at Katterat. The building in the left background is the one that appears centre of the picture on the left.'

for a landing at Bjerkvik. On May 9, after many signals to and from London, a strategy was finally agreed. While the French and the Norwegians continued to put pressure on the northern approaches to Bjerkvik, the 13ème Demi-Brigade de Légion Etrangère would launch a strong naval assault on Bjerkvik itself while the Poles would advance from Bogen in the west.

Shortly before midnight on May 12, a strong armada approached the eastern end of the Herjangen fjord. It comprised the battleship *Resolution*, the cruiser *Effingham*, eight destroyers, the support ship *Vindictive* and five large landing craft. After an hour of shelling, the 1er Bataillon of the Légion landed in the early hours of May 13 and took Bjerkvik from west to east after two hours fighting. The 2ème Bataillon disembarked in the afternoon at Medby, some distance to the east, and successfully overcame the strong resistance in the village. The Légion then marched on to the camp at Elvegårdsmoen which was captured after three hours of hand-to-hand fighting. Large stores of Norwegian ammunition and weapons were found as well as a German field hospital with 60 wounded. Béthouart quickly sent a motorcyclist platoon along the coastal road to the south and, with two British destroyers covering the sea flank, Øyjord was quickly taken without a fight for the Germans had pulled back into the mountains.

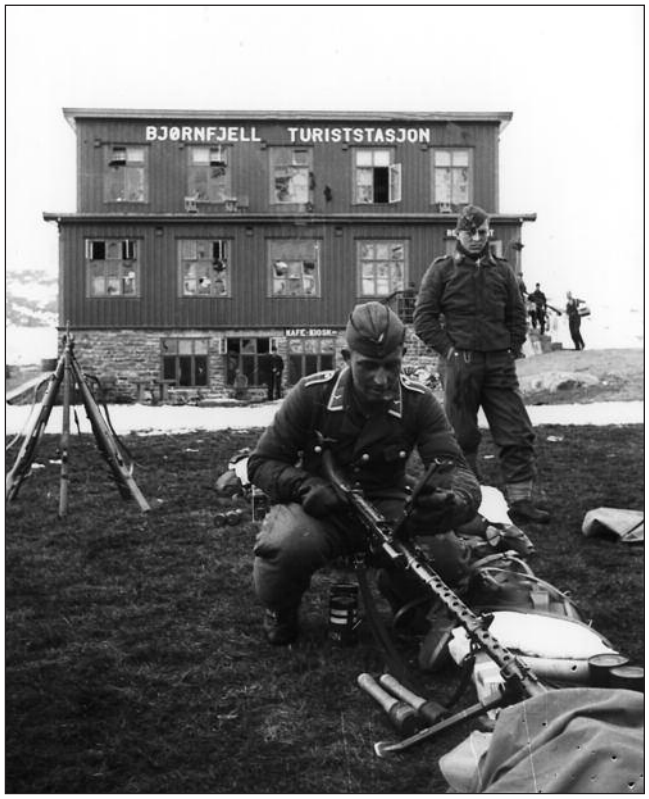
Contact was soon made at Bjerkvik with the Poles who had pushed eastwards from Bogen and in the north the 27ème Demi-Brigade and the Norwegians driving southwards took Hills 676 and 664 on May 14, finally establishing contact with the Légion to the east of Bjerkvik.

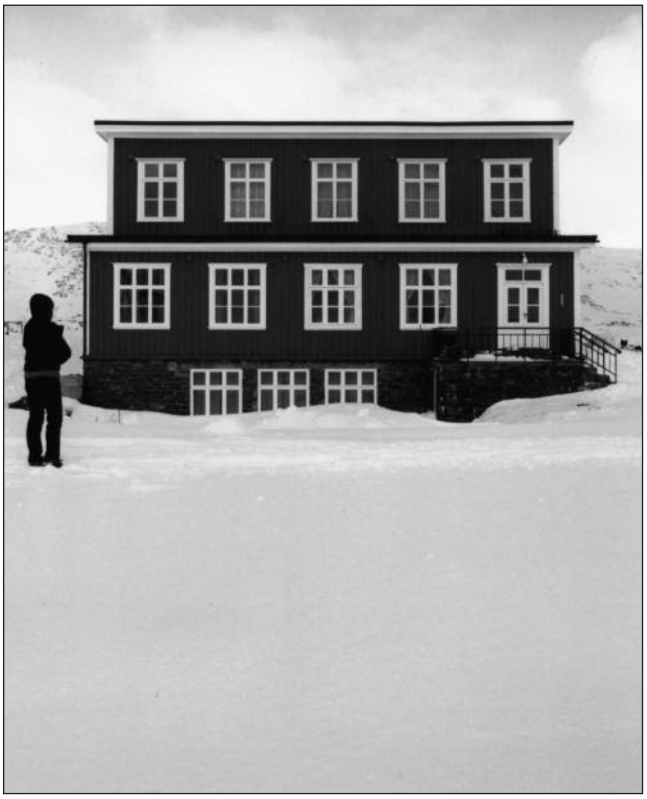
It was a brilliant victory, the first of the campaign in Norway. In London, it was considered as proof of the incompetence of Major-General Mackesy who had advised against it and on May 14 he was replaced by Lieutenant-General Claude Auchinleck who had landed at Harstad three days earlier.

The British decided to send more forces to stem the German advance northwards and the 1st Scots Guards (less one company that was already at Bodø) was landed at Mo on the morning of May 12. On the 14th, the 1st Irish Guards boarded the transport *Chrobry* at Harstad with plans to land at Bodø but the ship was attacked by the Luftwaffe during the night. She was hit and started to burn so the troops were taken off by HMS *Wolverine* and *Stork* and returned to Harstad having lost all their equipment. On May 17, the 2nd South Wales Borderers (one battalion of the Polish Brigade had started taking over the Ankenes sector from the 16th) boarded the

'Somewhere along the railway these German soldiers led some Norwegian prisoners in what seems to be a bearer party. As I later discovered (see *below*) they were walking down the railway in the direction of Katterat.' (Bundesarchiv)

'With the "porch" over the railway — it is not a tunnel, just a construction to protect the line from drifting snow — as a clue, I struggled for hours in knee-deep snow to finally find the right place at the third porch west of Bjørnfjell station. Huge ore trains of 50 carriages travel slowly and majestically down the line to Narvik, by day and night. With 12-14 trains every 24 hours, they are an impressive sight.'





Left: **From May 14 parachute troops from the I. Battalion of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 1 were dropped over Bjørnfjell to reinforce General Dietl's isolated forces. The paratroopers recovered their arms and equipment from the containers dropped over the plateau and sorted them out at the nearby railway station. Here a trooper checks his machine gun. (Bundesarchiv)** *Right:* **The old tourist office has since closed but the original building, now a private house, still stands beside the old railway station.**

Left: **A Leutnant addresses his men in front of the railway station. (Bundesarchiv)** *Right:* **The Bjørnfjell station is still exactly the same over 60 years later. JP: 'It was a precious moment to be there alone, with an icy wind blowing snow across the plateau, and only the whistle of an approaching ore train echoing in the far distance to break the silence.'**

Three successive shots of Ju 52s dropping supplies for the paratroops on the Bjørnfjell plateau. Note how packages are released without parachutes from an altitude as low as 20 metres (see *below left*), the snow contributing to a soft landing. (ECPAD)

Right: **JP: 'There are a large number of cottages on the plateau, many of them new, and it was quite a challenge — and more hours of struggling through deep snow — to finally find the correct one which lay far to the west of the railway station.'**

Left: **After a hasty training course at the parachute school at Stendal, paratroopers from the 1. Kompanie of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 137 — basically mountain troops — were dropped at Bjørnfjell on May 23. Close inspection shows that this is the same cottage as the one seen on the page opposite, although this shot is from another roll of negatives, so it was possibly taken on another day. (ECPAD)** *Right:* **This time we are looking south-west on the western part of the plateau.**

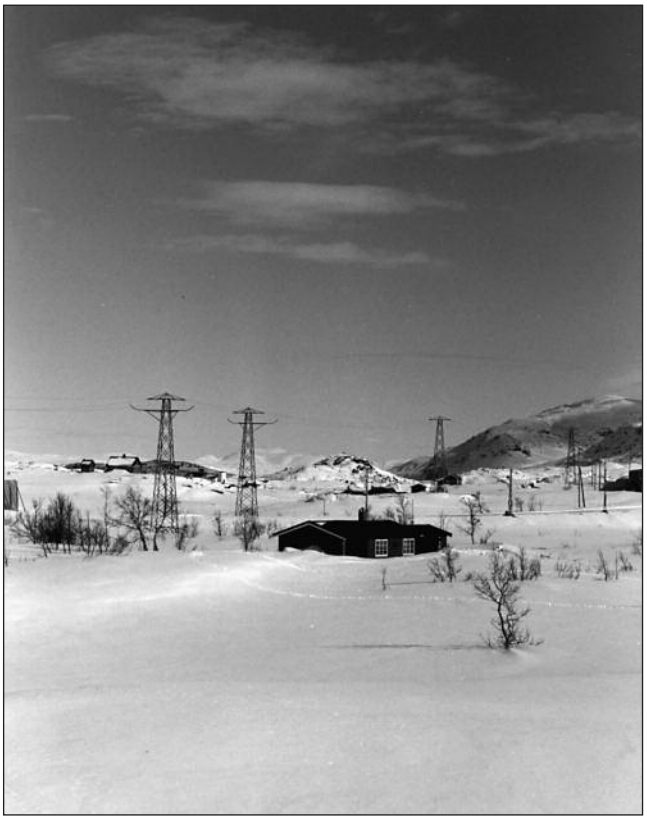
cruiser *Effingham*, destined for Bodø but it ran aground 12 miles from its destination and was lost. The troops on board, some 1,000 men, were rescued by the escort cruisers and destroyers and taken back to Harstad having lost most of their equipment. The British reinforcements finally reached Bodø using local fishing vessels.

After May 15 the situation in France worsened by the day and Churchill flew to Paris on the 16th for an urgent meeting of the Supreme War Council. The following day he reported back to the War Cabinet about the gravity of the situation and said that it should be considered whether 'Narvik was eating up what we needed for our own defence'. On May 23, the Chiefs-of-Staff pointed out the political advantages 'of being able to say that we had captured Narvik' and recommended that the taking of the town should be followed by the complete evacuation of Norway. Thus the principle of a departure from Norway was decided.

Late on May 24 Admiral Cork received instructions 'to evacuate northern Norway at earliest moment' because troops, ships and equipment were 'urgently required for defence of United Kingdom'. He was not authorised to appraise the Norwegians of the decision. He informed Auchinleck on the 25th and Béthouart on the 26th. On the 27th, the Admiral reported to the Chiefs-of-Staff that Béthouart 'represented to General Auchinleck, who entirely agrees, that there may be extreme difficulty in withdrawing British and French troops now fighting side by side with Norwegians in contact with enemy without betraying them.'

The containers and equipment dropped across the snow-covered plateau were unpacked in front of a cottage. The men gathered here illustrate the motley collection of units under General Dietl's command: sailors from the Kriegsmarine; mountain troops just promoted paratroopers (note the edelweiss badges on their caps or shoulders), and at least one man from the Luftwaffe. One could even speculate that the chap in the centre, who looks like a civilian, might even be a crewman from one of the lost destroyers who had acquired new clothing after his own uniform was ruined with oil when his ship went down. (ECPAD)

With all his experience of tracing the most improbable locations, even Jean Paul never believed that he would be able to match this picture . . . and to find the very same cottage unchanged since May 1940!



Left: **It's easy when you know! It now appears that the wartime photographer was merely standing in the middle of the vast plateau and just taking shots of the paratroopers as they fell all around him. (ECPAD)** *Right:* **Bjørnfjell, looking eastwards in the direction of the railway station off to the right in middle distance. Beyond lies Sweden.**

The Nazi Party's newspaper, the *Völkischer, Beobachter,* published a descriptive account by Obergefreiter Dambeck of the paratroopers landing at Bjørnfjell: 'After a smooth trip we reached Trondheim airbase. Everyone was keyed up and on the alert. We started north to Narvik. An uncanny landscape sailed past beneath us. Nothing but mountains, snows and ice. It was bitter cold. After several hours of flight we finally reached our drop point. "Get ready!" Out I go! I made a smooth landing, set down on a moss-covered expanse of free snow. Then it was on to the so-called Base 2 with a Norwegian bearer column. Once up on the mountain, we were surprised and not exactly pleased to learn that we had still farther to go, that we were supposed to occupy Hill 698 with our trench mortar train. The Swedish border ran along 150 metres from our new position. So, we had to take charge of the right flank of the German front at Narvik.' (Bundesarchiv)

Left: **Jean Paul hoped that this shot of General Dietl would turn out to be him posing in front of his field headquarters. JP also had an original German map of May 1940 in his possession on which a flag indicated where the divisional HQ was situated — in the large U-curve of the railway line at the western end of the Bjørnfjell plateau. And so it turned out . . . although on this particular occasion Jean Paul's thunder was stolen from him as the location was already known locally! (Bundesarchiv)** *Right:* **However, it was still quite a struggle in knee-deep snow to reach the old stone house which still stands several hundred metres from the nearest road although it is only 50 metres or so from the railway line.**

By then the final assault on Narvik was about to be launched from three different directions. The two battalions of the 13ème Demi-Brigade de Légion Etrangère and the 2nd Battalion of the Norwegian 15th Infantry Regiment setting out from Øyjord were to cross the Rombak fjord and land on the beach at Orneset, just east of Narvik. Simultaneously, south-west of Narvik, the Polish Brigade would attack Ankenes with three battalions and then cross and turn the Beisfjord to occupy Narvik from the south. Finally, the 14ème BCA (which had landed on the 18th at Lilleberg on the north shore of the Rombak fjord) would continue its attack eastward along the northern bank of the fjord towards Hundalen at the eastern end. As with the assault at Bjerkvik, the Royal Navy would give strong support with a massive naval bombardment.

Heavy shelling of the shore began some time before midnight on May 27 and the 1er Bataillon of the Légion landed as planned on the Orneset beach in the early hours of the 28th. The Germans reacted strongly when the French started to advance inland and ferocious hand-to-hand fighting ensued before the Germans fell back to the railway line high above the beach. The Norwegian battalion then landed on Orneset beach as planned but the second wave of the Légion was late for the German artillery had started to shell Øyjord just as the 2ème Bataillon was about to embark, causing losses and delays.

At daybreak the Luftwaffe made an appearance and targeted the Allied fleet that was forced to withdraw, leaving the troops without artillery support. The Germans immediately took advantage of this and launched strong counter-attacks that nearly pushed the attackers back to the beach.

The 2ème Bataillon of the Légion finally landed at Taraldsvik (between Orneset and Narvik) from 6.15 a.m. with three tanks in support. The hard-pressed 1er Bataillon then launched a new attack, progressively taking the upper hand, and by 7 a.m., as it advanced eastwards toward Straumsnes, the Norwegians and the 2ème Bataillon were moving along the railway line in the direction of Narvik.

In the south, the Poles succeeded in breaking the positions held by the 7. Kompanie of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 139 at the southern end of the Beisfjord, threatening the rear of the perimeter held by Gruppe Haussels at Narvik and east along the railway.

In Narvik itself, now left with only 150 Gebirgsjägers and 250 sailors to defend it, Major Haussels knew that he could not hold the town any longer and at 6.50 a.m. he ordered his troops to fall back southwards along the Beisfjord, the first assembly area being Fagernes. However many isolated groups did not receive the order and they kept on fighting until late in the afternoon. (Marine-Kompanie Möllmann was able to fight its way through later in the day but Marine-Kompanie Gaartzen was reported missing.)

While Norwegian elements entered the eastern suburb of Narvik, the French of the 2ème Bataillon circled round to the harbour area. Contact was made with the Poles at Beisfjord, and Général Béthouart entered Narvik at 9 p.m., being greeted by an enthusiastic population.

On May 29, while evacuation was being prepared, pursuit of the escaping Germans was launched eastwards along the railway in the direction of Sildvik, at the southern end of the Rombak fjord, and from Beisfjord after the clearing of the Narvik peninsula. On the other side of the Rombak fjord, the French and Norwegian troops slowly pushed Gruppe Windisch back eastwards. Over the following days, while Allied troops continued to operate in the Sildvik sector along the railway line, all other units were discreetly pulled back towards harbours at Harstad, Salangen, Skånland, Lilleberg, Beisfjord and Ankenes and embarked. The evacuation continued for five successive nights from June 3. The last troops to leave (on June 7) were the 1er Bataillon of the 13ème Demi-Brigade de Légion Etrangère, the 1st Battalion of the Polish Brigade, and elements of the 12ème BCA and of the 14ème BCA.

Seven troopships were deployed off the coast and Royal Navy destroyers acted as ferries from the harbours to the ships. Over 4,700 men were evacuated the first night, 4,900 men on the second, 5,100 men on the third, 5,200 men on the fourth and 4,600 men during the final night, a total of 24,500 men. The weather was poor, with rain and low cloud which kept Luftwaffe intervention to a minimum, and a fleet of 13 cargo ships — eight British and five French — left Harstad late on June 7 with as much of the equipment and supplies that could be loaded in the time and the seven troopships sailed on the morning of the 8th. The convoy was escorted by two cruisers, *Southampton* and *Coventry*, and five destroyers. Admiral Cork was on board *Southampton* together with Generals Auchinleck and Béthouart. That same day the German re-entered Narvik.

To the south, the British troops at Bodø were evacuated by destroyers over three nights from May 29 rescuing about 4,000 men in all from the 2nd South Wales Borderers and 1st Irish Guards. The Germans then entered Bodø at 10.15 a.m. on June 1.

Gruppe Hengl under Oberstleutnant Georg von Hengl, the commander of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 137, had resumed the advance northwards on June 5 with the aim of joining up with the garrison at Narvik. There was no road in their sector so they had to travel across country but they succeeded in reaching Skojmbotn, 40 kilometres south of Narvik, on the 11th and were able to link up with Dietl's force on the 13th.

Victims of the Allied fiasco in Norway, these British prisoners are marched through Trondheim having probably arrived by train as this roll of film begins at the railway station. They could well be members of the 146th Brigade. (Bundesarchiv)

Monica Buan took this nice comparison at Torvet (the market place) in the centre of Trondheim. On the top of the column in the centre of the square is the statue of Olav Tryggvasson, the founder of the city.

KING HÅKON LEAVES NORWAY

Ever since May 24, the question of when to inform the Norwegians about the complete evacuation of Norway had been debated at several meetings of the War Cabinet, and on the 28th Churchill still decided to hold off for a few days before telling them. However events the following morning at Tromsø made it only too clear what was in the wind, and Sir Cecil Dormer, the British Minister in Norway, was on the receiving end of much vitriol when he met members of the Norwegian government later that day. At Narvik, the Allied commanders felt increasingly reluctant to keep the Norwegians in the dark and Auchinleck wrote to Ironside on the 30th how 'the situation vis-à-vis the Norwegians is particularly difficult and one feels a most despicable creature in pretending that we are going on fighting when we are going to quit at once'. Dormer finally went to Tromsø during the afternoon and there informed the Norwegian Defence Minister Birger Ljungberg of the decision to pull out.

Presented with a fait accompli, the Norwegians immediately decided to review again the question of adopting the so-called Mowinckel Plan which had been rejected two weeks earlier. According to this proposal initiated in Sweden, the Germans were to be asked not to occupy northern Norway if Franco-British forces evacuated it, while Swedish troops would occupy the Narvik sector to guarantee that the agreement was respected. London had approved the plan for at least it would allow the Allies to gain some time to evacuate their troops but it soon appeared that the plan was doomed. On June 3, even as Foreign Minister Koht still carried out negotiations with his Swedish counterpart at Luleå, the decision was taken to evacuate King Håkon and his government to England. However the King agonised over his decision for several days: undecided whether to leave Norway or stay in order to share the fate of his countrymen. When Dormer went to see him on the 6th, the King's hesitation was 'soon dispelled' and he agreed to fall in line with the arrangements made by the British. The Norwegian ministers continued to vacillate, some even requesting a postponement of the evacuation, but Dormer refused, saying that the last ship to leave, the cruiser *Devonshire*, would be at the Norwegian government's disposal at Tromsø but that in any event she would sail at 8 p.m. the following evening.

The last British soldiers, some Norwegian volunteers, the ministers and their staff and the diplomatic corps boarded the *Devonshire* on the afternoon of the 7th with the King, Prince Olav and their aides arriving in the evening. They boarded the cruiser which hoisted anchor at 8 p.m. as planned. General Ruge remained behind to surrender with his

King Håkon was the one strong figure in this sorry tale, rallying his nation at a time when its political leaders had completely failed in their responsibility to defend it. Here the King boards the *Devonshire* at Tromsø on the evening of June 7 bound for five years in exile in Britain. This picture comes from Norway's Resistance Museum in Oslo which covers not only the battle in 1940, but also the occupation, the resistance and the subsequent liberation of Norway in 1945. Among the exhibits shown is an operational order washed ashore from the *Blücher* after she was sunk on April 9 and the capitulation agreement signed on June 10, 1940. Norway's Resistance Museum is situated in the old fortress of Akershus, overlooking Oslo harbour, an easy walk from the city centre. Close by is the Armed Forces Museum and the Akershus Castle itself, also open to the public. (E-mail: hjemmefront@c2i.net)

The victorious German commanders on parade in Oslo: Kurt Bräuer, the German Minister in Oslo; Admiral Hermann Boehm, Commanding Admiral Norway, and General Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, Commander-in-Chief of Operation 'Weserübung' Nord. Although the invasion of Norway was the first campaign jointly planned and executed by ground, sea and air forces, it should be noted that unified planning and direction had not been achieved. The Luftwaffe and the Kriegsmarine had kept separate control over their own forces and von Falkenhorst exercised no direct authority over units belonging to these two services. Also direct orders from the German High Command had further complicated his task. As discussed in the after action report by Gruppe XXI in July 1940: 'That the command and troops contingencies of the three armed forces branches worked together almost without friction cannot be credited to purposeful organisation of the commanding staff. It was, instead, entirely an achievement of the personalities involved who knew well how to co-operate closely in order to overcome the inadequacies of organisation.' (Bundesarchiv)

troops, adamant that having already abandoned his men once in central Norway, he would not leave them again.

On April 24 the Germans had appointed Josef Terboven, the Gauleiter at Essen, as commissioner for occupied Norway (Reichskommissar fur die besetzten Norwegischen Gebiete), a position he would hold until the end of the war. (In February 1942, seeking an advantage by nominally having a Norwegian in a position of power to try to reduce the resentment of the population, the Germans appointed Quisling to the post of Minister President although all the power remained with Terboven's administration.)

With the final Allied withdrawal on June 8, and the Norwegian capitulation on the 10th, Gruppe XXI had obtained all the objectives that the OKW had planned in Norway. In the history of modern warfare, the 'Weserübung' operation stands as the first campaign jointly planned and executed by ground, sea and air forces. Surprise, boldness, tactical innovation, and tactical air support had been the keys to the success.

Apart for the Kriegsmarine losses, the Wehrmacht had suffered insignificant casualties. The operation had cost the Germans 1,317 killed and 2,375 lost at sea or otherwise missing. Allied losses amounted to 1,335 Norwegians killed; 1,896 British killed and 2,500 lost at sea, with 530 French and Poles killed.

The Kriegsmarine naval losses included one heavy cruiser, two light cruisers, ten destroyers, one torpedo boat, 15 small vessels and six submarines. Allied losses amounted to one aircraft carrier, two cruisers, eight destroyers (one French and one Polish) and five submarines (including one Polish).

It quickly appeared that the importance of Narvik's ore harbour facilities had been greatly over-estimated, both by the Allies and the Germans. With the Kriegsmarine in secure control of the Baltic, it was possible to increase shipments by that route and to build up stocks during the summer months, and with the capture of mines in Belgium and France, this reduced the importance of those in northern Sweden. The operational successes of 'Weserübung' did not translate into strategic advantages but rather into the significant burden associated with occupying a semi-hostile nation with 300,000 troops, although on balance the benefits of occupying Norway exceeded the costs for Germany. *Above:* **Karl Johans is the main street in Oslo with the University to the left and Studenterlunden park on the right.**

LA FRANCE
A SES FILS,
ET
A LEURS FRERES D'ARMES
TOMBES GLORIEUSEMENT
EN NORVÈGE
NARVIK 1940